

# Growing PPGs Podcast Script

Hello, and welcome to this podcast about a new national campaign – Growing Patient Participation. I'm Rachel Salaman.

This campaign is groundbreaking, as it's a joint initiative between the Royal College of General Practitioners, the British Medical Association, the NHS Alliance, and the National Association for Patient Participation. That means patients will be working alongside healthcare professionals to support greater patient involvement in practices across the country.

As things stand in the middle of 2009, 40 percent of English practices have a patient participation group – or PPG. This campaign aims to encourage more practices to form a patient group, as well as developing existing PPGs. Why are these kinds of groups important?

*Mike Dixon: They're the ears and the eyes of a practice. They're the way the practice connects to the community. They're the way the practice makes sure that what it's offering is what patients want.*

Mike Dixon, Chairman of the NHS Alliance, one of the organisations providing leadership in this new drive for greater patient participation.

*Mike Dixon: I think this campaign is more than a campaign. I think it's the beginning of a movement – a movement which is bringing together all the major organisations in primary care, shouting from the rooftops that general practice is no longer GPs and practice managers running general practice. It's now a partnership with patients.*

Dr Dixon can speak with some authority about the difference patient participation can make. In his own practice in Devon, patients get involved wherever they can.

*Mike Dixon: We've got two patients that run the herb garden, the organic garden. We've got patients running the integrated library, some meeting and greeting, some organising evening lectures. One ex-school teacher organising an art display in the waiting room from the local primary schools on health and art. So just about every aspect of health being covered.*

When patients can do so much, why do less than half of English practices have a patient participation group? Here's Dr Graham Box, Chief Executive of the National Association for Patient Participation.

*Graham Box: Well from our research it's pretty clear that practices are worried about the time that would be involved in setting up a group. They're worried about the kinds of patients who might come forward who might make it awkward to run the group. And equally they're legitimately concerned about representing the wider population. So in the work that we're doing over the next year, we're going to try to address each of those reservations.*

*Q: How is this campaign going to work? How long will it run and what will it involve?*

*Graham Box: Well the campaign runs for a year. We've based it upon research that's been carried out over the last four or five years. In fact, NAPP's research has covered well over 4,000 practices during that time period, and also some specific focus groups and other research, to understand what would make a difference. So over the course of the next year we're going to be rolling out resources we think will meet the needs we've heard about from the people we've spoken to. The starting point is a step by step guide, so that the setting up of a group is made as easy as possible for practices. There's also a joint publication from the NHS Alliance, RCGP and NAPP which explains the ways that PPGs make sense from different perspectives: the GP perspective, the practice manager, the patient and the PCT perspective. So we hope that in those two publications we're covering the 'why do it' and the 'how to do it'.*

*Q. What do you hope the campaign will achieve?*

*Graham Box: I think primary care in this country is special and I think it relies heavily upon a relationship between practices and their patients. I think there are a number of factors in the modern world that put stress on that relationship. So what I want the campaign to achieve, among other things, is that it really reinforces the sense that practices are there for their patients, that they value their patients, but also that patients need to take more responsibility for their own health.*

GP leaders are equally motivated to grow patient participation, recognising that as users of primary care services, patients can – and indeed should – help shape the future of those services.

Professor Steve Field is chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners, another of the organisations backing this campaign. He has high hopes about what it can achieve.

*Steve Field: Well this campaign should help us to ensure that all practices have a patient participation group by the end of the year. I think we have to be very ambitious in our aims. This is so important for taking the health service forward at a local and national level. GPs need to be emotionally engaged in this to understand the benefits for them and for the practice, as well as for the patients that they serve.*

*Q. What difference will it make to the healthcare landscape if that aim is achieved?*

*Steve Field: I think with more active involvement of patients at practice level, we can better design services for the local community. That will mean that patients will have a better access to care, a better choice of services, but also we can then target resources to care and treatments that work. I think patients need to be part of that decision-making process and help us with what will at times be difficult decisions about where we spend local money.*

Dr Laurence Buckman is Chairman of the British Medical Association's General Practitioners committee. He shares the view that practices can benefit enormously from having a patient participation group.

*Laurence Buckman: They're a good thing, they're easy, they involved very little effort on practice's part and they give patients a focus. They are huge supporters. They are almost never adversely critical and almost invariably allies. I think they're of great use and I hope people will have a go at forming one, if they never have, or at least think about it. Time you thought about better patient responsiveness for your practice and this is a good way of doing it.*

There's lots of information about the campaign on a dedicated website: [www.growingppgs.com](http://www.growingppgs.com). So you're interested in starting or developing a patient participation group, do take a look. Goodbye.