



Royal College of
General Practitioners



BMA

Dear Provider,

A patient registered with our practice has recently presented to the surgery with the results of screening tests from your services that would not have been conducted in the NHS.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and British Medical Association (BMA) does not support non-evidence-based screening which has not been approved by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC), National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Health Improvement Scotland, Public Health Wales, or the Department of Health Northern Ireland.

The UK National Screening Committee is an independent body hosted by Public Health England who oversees the evidence for screening programmes and recommend for or against their implementation in the UK. NICE makes recommendations about screening for England and the health improvement and public health bodies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland make recommendations for the devolved nations. Screening recommended by these organisations will have gone through a rigorous assessment process and have a strong evidence base.

Non-evidence-based screening which has not been approved by any of the above organisations may lack evidence of benefit and may cause more harm than good. For example, such screening may lead to the identification and/or treatment of conditions which would not otherwise have caused mortality or morbidity, may introduce lead time bias (where earlier diagnosis has no positive impact on outcomes, and may only have negative effects), and may cause the patient to experience stress or experience side effects from the tests themselves. Without appropriate follow up or patient information about how to use the results through the screening provider itself, this can also lead to increased unnecessary pressures on the NHS which is already heavily strained.

The RCGP and BMA strongly recommend that providers only offer screening that is recommended by the UK NSC, NICE or equivalent body in the devolved nations.

If providers such as yours continue to offer unapproved screening as outlined above, the RCGP and BMA asks that you ensure that patients are aware of what is, and is not, approved by the UK NSC or equivalent at the point of sale and that you offer follow up of the results that does not put pressure on NHS general practice workload and use limited NHS resource. The BMA and RCGP are in discussions with regulators to help to ensure that good medical practice is followed by all providers in this area.

Yours faithfully,

Name:

GP practice: