



IGPM STATEMENT ON GDPDR

General practice fully supports the use of anonymised and aggregated patient data to assist with medical research, analysis, and public health decisions, amongst other things. We recognise that without such information, progress would be severely hampered.

However, we think the recent press speculation about the new General Practice Data for Planning and Research (GPDPR) initiative has meant that it is less likely that such data will be readily available.

General practice was not given sufficient warning about the launch of the new system, meaning that the media have been able to paint a picture that some might find misleading, and most patients will find scary. Individual practices have been inundated with emails and phone calls from patients worried that their identifiable personal data is going to be sold by the NHS to the highest bidder – or, more likely, bidders.

With the COVID-19 vaccination programme continuing and general practice trying to return to core services now that the pandemic restrictions are easing, this does not help. It also adds grist to the mill of the anti-vaccination campaigners who try to convince the public that everything about the NHS is a huge conspiracy designed to harm them and their families.

Yet again, with primary care being the last to know about this important development, we have been put on the back foot. What a wasted opportunity, when with enough notice we could have explained to our patients how this type of data sharing would actually be beneficial to them.

We also think that patients having to opt out of data sharing risks being confusing, especially when the whole ethos of current data protection regulations is that individuals must actively opt in; their lack of engagement cannot simply be taken as a tacit agreement (as demonstrated by the “At a glance” guide to the GDPR provided by the ICO [here](#)). Again, further time to explain this to patients would almost certainly have helped.

For the above reasons, we are therefore pleased to hear the announcement that the introduction of the GDPDR has been put back to 01.09.2021.

We are fully behind the use of data in primary care to help us develop new medication and new health strategies. We ask that you communicate with us at the earliest possible opportunity. In particular, we would like to ask you to ensure that the Institute of General Practice Management is able to provide input to your plans and, most importantly, your communications, to ensure that the practices that will be most keenly impacted by your decisions are consulted and considered first.