



# Cleveland Local Medical Committee

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LETTERS/STD/CERTIFICATION-EMPLOYERS

Date:.....

**To: Employers on Teesside and surrounding areas**

Dear Sir / Madam,

## **Requests for Short-Term Medical Certification - Employers**

For many years Cleveland LMC have maintained a policy on short-term medical certification which was widely circulated among GPs. Our policy has not changed, and is that GPs should not issue certificates for periods of sickness which do not require the issuing of a medical certificate under the Social Security arrangements.

Since the advent of self-certification for statutory sick pay purposes in 1983, GPs have not been obliged to issue certificates for periods of sickness of 7 days or less. A GP is entitled to charge a patient whatever they deem appropriate for a short term certificate. However, NHS GPs do not relish the prospect of charging patients, especially where the provision of such a certificate is a requirement of the patient's employer. Moreover, with the increasing number of commitments of GPs, they have no wish to waste valuable surgery time seeing patients suffering from minor, self-limiting illnesses, or those capable of self-treatment, only to be asked to provide a sick note. This policy is in accord with reports from the Government encouraging greater use of company occupational health services.

Your employee has asked for a short term medical certificate and the doctor has, quite reasonably, declined to issue this to his patient. The LMC's position on this question is quite clear. It is not part of a GP's job to police employers' occupational sick pay schemes. Standard disciplinary procedures, as recommended by ACAS, provide employers with the means to deal with employees suspected of abusing the privilege of self-certification and/or have a record of persistent short-term sickness absence. If employers require additional certification it is open to them to make their own arrangements with a doctor, either the patient's own GP or an occupational health doctor, on a private basis, to examine and verify the genuineness of the patient's illness. Leaving it to employees to trouble their GP for these purposes during normal surgery hours is a waste of NHS time and resources, and is a practice which we accordingly disapprove.

We regret if this policy causes inconvenience to employers but feel that if the DSS can discharge its obligations without the need for short-term certification, employers should follow suit or else be prepared to make their own arrangements for sickness verification.

Yours faithfully

Dr J T Canning  
Secretary