PRIORITY TREATMENT FOR WAR PENSIONERS

Executive summary

These guidelines advise health authorities and trusts of an extension of the definition of the term "war pensioner" to cover people who were injured or disabled as a result of service in the armed forces either before the First World War or between 1 October 1921 and 2 September 1939, the "inter-war years".

Health authorities and trusts are also reminded of the arrangements for priority treatment of war pensioners.

Action

Chief Executives of health authorities and trusts should ensure that general practitioners and relevant hospital staff are advised of the new definition and are reminded of the arrangements for the priority treatment of war pensioners.

Background

A war pensioner has previously been classified as someone who has a pension or who had a gratuity for disablement caused by armed service during the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars and service since 1945. This includes merchant seamen and civilians who receive pensions for wartime injuries.

The term "war pensioner" has now been extended to cover people who were injured or disabled as a result of service in the armed forces either before the First World War or between 1 October 1921 and 2 September 1939, the "inter-war years".

In 1953 hospitals run by the Ministry of Pensions for the treatment of war pensioners were transferred to the NHS. The Government gave an undertaking that there would be priority examination and treatment for war pensioners in NHS hospitals for the condition or conditions for which the war pensioners received a pension or gratuity.

NHS hospitals should give priority to war pensioners, both as out-patients and in-patients, for examination or treatment which relates to the condition or conditions for which they receive a pension or received a gratuity (unless there is an emergency case or another case demands clinical priority). Priority should not be given for unrelated conditions.

Referrals for treatment should make it clear that the patient is a war pensioner and requires treatment for the condition or conditions for which the war pensioner was given a pension or gratuity.

War pensioners can use the NHS complaints system to resolve any alleged breakdowns in the arrangements for priority treatment. This includes ultimately asking the Health Service Commissioner to investigate their case.
Cancelled Circular

HSG(94)28 is cancelled

Addressees

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