

PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release: Thursday, 26 November 2009

THE COMPLAINT YOU DON'T WANT TO RECEIVE, WARNS MDDUS.

One of the worst complaints that a doctor can receive is that he inappropriately touched or examined a patient or worse still sexually assaulted a patient, warns the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS).

This is not an unusual complaint and most commonly arises from a misunderstanding between the doctor and patient.

The issue is being highlighted by MDDUS after receiving calls for advice from GP practices about the roles of chaperones.

Dr Anthea Martin, senior medical adviser with the UK-wide MDDUS says: "The very nature of this type of complaint means that it must be taken seriously by all involved until the matter is resolved.

"It is not unusual for patients making this type of complaint to report their concerns directly to the GMC or the police.

"Doctors will be in a better position to justify their actions by following the detailed guidance issued by the GMC entitled "Maintaining boundaries-guidance for doctors", which is available from the GMC website at www.gmc-uk.org."

In essence the guidance advises that doctors must give careful consideration to what a patient may perceive as an intimate examination. This will generally include the breast, genitalia and rectum but for some patients may include the chest, groin or abdomen.

In addition the doctor should ensure that the patient understands the nature of the examination, the purpose of the examination and the reasons for it. The doctor should ensure that the patient has given clear verbal consent and should document this.

Dr Martin adds: "Wherever possible a chaperone should be offered, even when doctor and patient are of the same gender. Whilst a chaperone does not have to be medically qualified they must be familiar with normal examination techniques and good conduct.

"The name of the chaperone used should be recorded. If a patient declines the offer of a chaperone this should also be noted.

“Doctors are also advised to give patients the privacy to undress and should allow patients to remove their own clothing, only assisting when asked.

Ends

For further information contact Colin Calder on 0141 616 2677 or 07850 510881.

Note to editors

MDDUS is a medical defence organisation providing access to professional indemnity and expert medicolegal advice for doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals throughout the UK. For further information on MDDUS go to www.mddus.com.