

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **DOCTORS OUT ON A LIMB WITHOUT MEDICAL DEFENCE COVER**

A small but significant segment of hospital doctors are not members of a medical defence organisation and risk hefty legal bills if faced with professional or disciplinary proceedings, according to a survey commissioned by MDDUS.

The survey carried out by the independent market research agency GfK Healthcare showed that 5% of hospital doctors were not signed up to a medical defence organisation (MDO).

The main reason given was that the doctors believe that their employing Trust provides sufficient "cover", but MDDUS stresses that this is not the case when a doctor is referred to the General Medical Council.

In these circumstances, a doctor who is not signed up to an MDO would have to pay for their own legal advice and representation, which could be very costly.

In addition doctors are vulnerable if they are asked to attend a fatal accident inquiry or coroner's inquest where their position may conflict with that of their Trust.

Dr Anthea Martin, senior medical adviser with the UK-wide MDDUS says: "It is alarming that our survey revealed such a large number of hospital doctors seem unaware of the potential pitfalls of not being a member of a defence organisation.

"Many believe their employing Trust covers them for all eventualities and are unaware of the risks in cases which fall outside of the Trust's indemnity provision."

Dr Martin adds: "Any complaint to the GMC is a frightening and daunting experience, even with advice and assistance from a medical defence organisation.

"A doctor who is not a member of an MDO is effectively on their own as they will not be able to obtain expert medico-legal advice from their Trust. In addition should legal representation be necessary at any hearing the doctor will need to bear his or her own costs which are likely to be substantial.

"All hospital doctors should be in membership with an MDO to ensure that they are not exposed to unnecessary personal risk. MDDUS prides itself in providing expert medico-legal advice in relation to GMC procedures and representation at fatal accident inquiries and coroner's inquests."

The GMC on its website provides guidance on the benefits of MDO membership and states: "The protection that comes from employment in the NHS is by no means sufficient to cover all situations in which you may find yourself."

Ends

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

**Note to editors**

MDDUS (Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland) 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](http://www.mddus.com).