

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **RUDE DOCTORS THREATEN PATIENT SAFETY, WARNS MDDUS**

Doctors who are rude to colleagues could pose a threat to patient safety and quality of care. The day to day stresses of modern medical practice can easily lay the foundations of a situation where a doctor may cause offence.

The UK-wide medical defence organisation MDDUS is warning doctors about the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with their fellow workers. This follows a report in the *BMJ* which shows that rudeness can distract medical teams and draw their attention away from crucial tasks. This is a particular issue in confined spaces such as operating theatres where rudeness between colleagues can impair team members' thinking skills, the report says.

The *BMJ* editorial reported the results of a survey of 391 NHS operating theatre staff, in which two-thirds (66%) of respondents said they had been subject to aggressive behaviour from nurses and more than half (53%) from surgeons during the previous six months.

The editorial goes on to report that psychological research has shown that as well as causing upset to a colleague incivility can affect patient safety. Indeed the *BMJ* observes that "a series of studies has shown that being the victim of rudeness can impair cognitive skills".

Dr John Holden, a senior medical adviser at MDDUS says: "Doctors might not realise that something as basic as being rude to a colleague could ultimately harm the care of a patient.

"Doctors must at all times be mindful of the overriding duty of a doctor - as expressed by the GMC - to make the care of their patients their first concern.

"Consequently, any circumstance that may impair that duty – such as a poor relation with a colleague - is to be avoided".

To comply with GMC requirements, MDDUS advises that doctors must:

- *Respect the skills and contributions of their colleagues*
- *Communicate effectively with doctors within and outside the team*
- *Make sure that colleagues (as well as patients) understand their role and responsibilities in the team*
- *Support colleagues who have problems with performance, conduct or health.*
- *Treat colleagues fairly and with respect, avoiding bullying, harassment or unfair discrimination, taking care not to make malicious and unfounded criticisms of colleagues that may undermine patients' trust in the care or treatment patients receives or in the judgement of those treating the patients.*

Dr Holden adds: "Doctors should always strive to maintain good relationships with colleagues, and not simply as a means to patient safety as the GMC requires doctors to establish good relationships with colleagues - as well as with patients - as a fundamental matter of good medical practice. This duty includes acting as a positive role model with commitment to motivating and inspiring colleagues."

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 medico-legal 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).