

PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release: Friday, 01 October 2010

WORK WITHIN LIMITS OF CAPABILITIES, WARNS MDDUS

Doctors must resist pressure to practise outwith their competence as to do so risks jeopardising patient safety.

The UK-wide medical defence organisation MDDUS is warning doctors not to work beyond their capabilities. The move follows the publication of the latest report from the BMA Cohort Study tracing the careers of more than 400 medical graduates from 2006.

The study found that some doctors are not receiving the training they need to undertake the work required of them as specialist trainees.

Three in 20 (15 per cent) doctors also reported that they had been asked to undertake tasks that were beyond their capabilities - with this proportion rising to over one third (36%) for doctors on general practice placements.

Dr John Holden, a senior medical adviser at MDDUS says: "All doctors have a fundamental duty - as stated by the GMC - to recognise and work within the limits of their competence.

"Any doctor in training who has good reason to think that patient safety is or may be seriously compromised has a duty to act. This may be because inadequate resources, policies or systems in their workplace require them to undertake tasks beyond their capabilities.

"If individual doctors cannot readily resolve the situation they should draw their concerns to the attention of their employing or contracting body – such as the relevant Trust or Health Board - and keep a careful record of the particular concerns and the steps they have taken to try and resolve them. If the concerns remain unresolved doctors should seek individual independent advice."

Dr Holden offers additional advice to senior doctors with responsibility for training junior colleagues: "When a senior doctor asks a junior colleague to provide care or treatment on their behalf the senior doctor will not be accountable for the decisions and actions of that junior doctor. However, the GMC is very clear that the delegating doctor will remain responsible for the overall management of an individual patient and accountable for the decision to delegate to a junior doctor.

Dr Holden concludes: "Senior doctors who delegate to their junior colleagues are advised to follow carefully the GMC guidance which states: *'When you delegate care or treatment you*

must be satisfied that the person to whom you delegate has the qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills to provide the care or treatment involved. You must always pass on enough information about the patient and the treatment they need'."

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.