

PRESS RELEASE



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JUNIOR DOCTORS MUST WORK WITHIN LIMITS OF CAPABILITIES, WARNS MDDUS

The UK-wide medical defence organisation has issued a reminder in response to Professor John Collins' evaluation of junior doctors' training (The Foundation Programme).

MDDUS is advising trainee doctors to resist pressure to practise outwith their competence as to do so risks jeopardising patient safety and may leave them open to criticism.

The move follows the publication of a new report by Professor John Collins of Medical Education England which raises concerns that junior doctors have been deployed in "inappropriate roles and beyond their level of competence."

The report was published yesterday and evaluates the Foundation Programme which has overseen the two-year post-graduate training of new doctors since 2005.

In *Foundation for Excellence – An Evaluation of the Foundation Programme*, Professor Collins raises a number of concerns, saying:

"We are extremely concerned that some Foundation trainees are expected to practise outside their level of competence and without appropriate supervision. This places patients at unnecessary risk and gives the trainee the message that suboptimal care is condoned, neither of which is part of the professional values and aspirations of a good doctor."

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.'*"

MDDUS supports any initiative to ensure no Foundation trainee is required to practise beyond their level of competence or without appropriate supervision.

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.