

# PRESS RELEASE



**For immediate release: Thursday, 20 January 2011**

## **BIG RISE IN CALLS AS "RISK-AWARE" DOCTORS SEEK ADVICE**

An increasingly "risk-aware" culture amongst doctors sparked a big rise in advice calls to the medical defence organisation MDDUS last year.

Doctors appear to be more alert to risk areas due to a number of recent high-profile negligence cases and are asking for help sooner.

The team of medical advisers at MDDUS handled a record total of 9779 contacts from those seeking help in 2010, up more than 7 per cent on the year before.

The organisation says one reason for the jump in the number of telephone calls, letters and emails to advisers is that doctors are being more proactive in seeking advice at an early stage about potential problems.

Dr Jim Rodger, head of professional services at MDDUS, says: "We are now receiving nearly 190 contacts a week from doctors seeking professional guidance and help.

"This is in part due to our steady growth in membership throughout the UK, but also because there is a greater awareness amongst medics that they should seek advice at the earliest possible opportunity.

"Doctors are becoming much more aware of risks in part due to the media highlighting significant cases. As a result, they are coming to us for advice at an early stage, before a problem has escalated.

"Often doctors fear the worst, but in many cases we can reassure them about the consequences of a particular issue and put it into perspective."

Hot topics on the MDDUS advice lines last year included subjects ranging from seeking advice on claims to patient complaints.

Dr Rodger says: "This could be linked to increased media coverage over the past year of so-called poor medical practice. Patients are being encouraged to speak up, but some simply go over the top."

Confidentiality issues were also a hot topic with the number of calls on this subject up substantially on last year. MDDUS says more doctors sought advice following the publication of the GMC's new guidance *Confidentiality* which came fully into effect at the start of 2010.

Calls from medics raising issues about problems with their colleagues also rose during the last year. "This can be put down to the fact that when people are under pressure at work, colleague problems can suddenly become a big issue," says Dr Rodger.

"Last year was difficult for many healthcare professionals who have been under increasing pressure to tighten budgets and take part in major Government plans to restructure general practice."

The analysis of all calls, emails and letters handled by MDDUS medical advisers during 2010 revealed the top ten reasons for making contact as:

1. Patient complaints
2. Confidentiality
3. Claims
4. General Medical Council issues
5. Difficult patients
6. Records
7. Indemnity cover
8. Colleague problem
9. Children protection issues
10. Miscellaneous topics

MDDUS is predicting a further increase in calls this year, as the trend towards risk aversion continues. The medical defence organisation has already responded to rising demand for its services by expanding its operations into new offices in London, with three new experienced medical advisers now based there. It is the first time that MDDUS has appointed advisers to work outside its Glasgow headquarters.

The move underlines the organisation's belief that there is a strong value to its members in having more locally-based advisers to call on.

Dr Rodger adds: "Our members – wherever they are based in the UK – get the very best advice. They find our service very approachable and as a result are comfortable about ringing or emailing us again in the future.

"MDDUS always provides a prompt and accurate response to all queries. We know that our members find our service immensely reassuring."

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)