

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **DOCTORS IN RIOT HOTSPOTS ADVISED TO STAY SAFE WHILE TREATING PATIENTS**

DOCTORS working in areas affected by rioting should take extra precautions to protect their practices while continuing to treat patients.

The UK-wide medical defence organisation MDDUS is advising GPs to take a common sense approach when providing healthcare services under such potentially dangerous circumstances.

Violent disorder has affected a number of GP practices across London, with media reports of break-ins and looting. Riots broke out in the capital on Saturday night and have continued over several days, spreading to other cities including Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham and Nottingham.

Dr Gail Gilmartin, senior medical adviser at MDDUS, says: "Doctors face real practical difficulties when trying to provide services during outbreaks of violence, as seen in the recent London riots.

"The main consideration for them at this time will be to continue providing these essential services to patients while taking steps to ensure no one's safety is being put at risk."

Londonwide Local Medical Committees (LMCs) has issued guidance for practices on how to reduce the risk to doctors and their practices in the wake of the rioting. MDDUS believes this advice sits comfortably with GMC guidelines – which must be followed even at times of civil unrest.

Dr Gilmartin says: "The GMC acknowledges that doctors face risks. In their guidance *Good Medical Practice* they make it clear that doctors should carry out a risk assessment and take steps to minimise risks or look to provide alternative arrangements.

"However it is also clear that the GMC expects doctors to behave professionally at all times, and if necessary be able to explain and justify their decisions and actions. We advise a commonsense approach, to include discussion with the PCT and LMC in order to maintain appropriate service arrangements."

MDDUS advises doctors to take extra steps to ensure the safety of practice staff and establish a protocol that allows safe entry and exit from the premises. If services are likely to be

disrupted by violent disorder then practices must inform patients, particularly if some home visits are no longer possible.

Dr Gilmartin says: "There are a number of practical steps that can be taken to protect practice staff and services under these circumstances. For example, with the risk of fire attacks on premises, practices should ensure paper medical records and any other essential computer files are in a safe, secure place. Each practice will have to make plans as to what to do in these circumstances. The general advice is to gather as much information as possible, decide on urgency, act in the patient's best interests and apply common sense."

## **Ends**

For further information contact Joanne Curran on 0845 270 2034.

## **Note to editors**

MDDUS (Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland) is a medical and dental defence organisation providing access to professional indemnity and expert medico- and dento-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).