

PRESS RELEASE

Friday, 18 March 2016

Medical Protection reminds members of its position on apologies

Following the launch of the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) report titled *General practice complaint handling across England: a thematic review*, which was released today in collaboration with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England and Health Watch, Medical Protection reminds members of its position on apologies.¹

Dr Rob Hendry, Medical Director at Medical Protection, advises members of the importance of open communication and apologising if something has gone wrong, regardless of fault.

“Unfortunately things do go wrong in healthcare and sometimes patients are dissatisfied, disappointed or upset with the care that they have received. Medical Protection has long advised members that an apology is not an admission of liability; rather, it is an acknowledgment that something has gone wrong and a way of expressing empathy. Our latest advice sheet on apologies reaffirms this.”

Dr Hendry added that contrary to popular belief, apologies tend to prevent formal complaints rather than the reverse.

“It is important that a meaningful apology should be offered as soon as it becomes apparent that an adverse incident has occurred or the patient is unhappy with their care. It may be some time before all the facts, and perhaps the reasons why and how the events occurred, are understood. Until these are established, speculation should be avoided as this is unhelpful to all involved. However, this consideration should not hinder a prompt apology being forthcoming.

“In addition, Medical Protection always advocates a full and objective review of the event, with the patient being informed as to any lessons that can be learnt moving forward. A commitment should be made to understand and learn from what has happened to reduce the likelihood of it happening to someone else.”

Ends.

For further information, please contact Shannon Darling, Press Officer at Medical Protection on +44 (0) 20 7399 1319 or shannon.darling@medicalprotection.org

Notes to editors

1. Medical Protection's full advice to members on apologies can be found [here](#)

About Medical Protection

Medical Protection is a trading name of The Medical Protection Society Limited (“MPS”). MPS is the world's leading protection organisation for doctors, dentists and healthcare professionals. We protect and support the professional interests of more than 300,000 members around the world. Our benefits include access to indemnity, expert advice and peace of mind. Highly qualified advisers are on hand to talk through a question or concern at any time.

Our in-house experts assist with the wide range of legal and ethical problems that arise from professional practice. This includes clinical negligence claims, complaints, medical and dental council inquiries, legal and ethical dilemmas, disciplinary procedures, inquests and fatal accident inquiries.

Our philosophy is to support safe practice in medicine and dentistry by helping to avert problems in the first place. We do this by promoting risk management through our workshops, E-learning, clinical risk assessments, publications, conferences, lectures and presentations.

MPS is not an insurance company. All the benefits of membership of MPS are discretionary as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.