

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MPS welcomes review of GMC treatment of vulnerable doctors under investigation

MPS (Medical Protection Society) welcomes the General Medical Council's (GMC) commitment to review the way it treats vulnerable doctors under fitness to practise investigations.

Dr Richard Stacey, Senior Medicolegal Adviser at MPS said:

"MPS is pleased that recommendations have been made to address the way in which fitness to practice investigations can affect vulnerable doctors. We are well aware of the serious impact a GMC investigation can have on a doctor's mental and/or physical health. Our recent survey of 180 doctors investigated by the GMC in the last five years¹ found that 93% of respondents' involved in GMC investigations felt that it had impacted on their stress/anxiety. 72% believed that the investigation had a detrimental impact on their mental and/or physical health.

"While we are still examining the detail of the recommendations, we hope that if implemented appropriately, they will begin to make a difference to the lives of doctors."

Commenting on recommendation one Dr Stacey said:

"In some cases, a letter informing a doctor that they are the subject of a GMC investigation can ignite feelings of fear and anxiety as the wording can appear formal and overly legalistic.

"MPS acknowledges that the GMC has recently taken steps to alter the wording of correspondence with doctors being investigated; however it is clear that more needs to be done. The wording must be improved to ensure that content can be easily understood by people with non-legal backgrounds and the tone should be softened and demonstrate greater compassion."

Commenting on recommendation nine, Dr Stacey said:

"We warmly welcome the concept of a national support network for doctors. We understand how important support of this kind is which is why we offer a confidential counselling service as a benefit of MPS membership. However the network would need to have appropriate confidentiality safeguards, and be adequately funded. It is important that doctors suffering with mental or physical problems relating to stress and/or anxiety get help early but also know that any information they share will be completely confidential."

"The GMC has committed to a meeting early next year to discuss what a national service might look like; we are keen to be a part of these discussions."

Our survey found that almost half of respondents (47%) did not believe they received enough support in looking after their health throughout the investigation. 70% of respondents said that the General Medical Council should offer more support to doctors facing an investigation.

The survey also revealed:

- Respondents' involvement in GMC investigations impacted on their personal life (76%), health and wellbeing (74%), confidence (69%) and professional reputation (52%)
- 28% considered leaving the medical profession as a result of their experience 8% changed their role, and 2% left the profession
- 77% of respondents to the survey sought help or support for their health issues from family or friends, and 62% sought assistance from colleagues.

Ends

For further information please contact Shannon Darling, MPS Press Officer at +44 020 7399 1319 or email shannon.darling@mps.org.uk

Notes to editors:

¹ *MPS conducted a survey of doctors, including GPs and consultants, who had been involved in a GMC investigation in the last five years to understand more about their experience and determine the impact it had on their health. The survey received 180 respondents.*

² *If you would like a picture of Dr Stacey, please contact me directly.*

About 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 290,000 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.

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