

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Doctors more fearful of GMC investigations than litigation

In yesterday's Health Select Committee hearing, the GMC suggested doctors practise defensively because of the threat of litigation; however MPS's experience is that it is the increasing scrutiny by the GMC, with half of those investigations requiring no action on the doctor's registration, which is causing most alarm and mistrust within the profession.

Dr Pallavi Bradshaw, medicolegal adviser at the Medical Protection Society said:

"We believe the GMC is bowing to public pressure to be seen to blame and punish doctors when things may have gone wrong. The investigations are slow and conducted in a disproportionate and punitive way. We are in a vicious cycle of tighter regulation leading to more defensive behaviour from doctors, which interferes with proper decision making and has a detrimental effect on the quality of patient care.

"While it is appropriate that the GMC investigates and sanctions unacceptable conduct, 50% of GMC investigations are closed with no further action, which indicates to us that triaging of complaints is inappropriate and sometimes arbitrary. These untargeted and disproportionate actions have a negative impact on the morale of doctors, which is reflected in increasing difficulties in recruitment and retention of doctors.¹

"Over 70% of respondents in a recent MPS survey who had been investigated by the GMC felt that the process had had a detrimental effect on their health, with more than a quarter having considered leaving the profession.²

"The GMC must find the right balance between educating and supporting doctors to meet high standards and sanctioning those who fail to meet those standards."

For further information or to interview Dr Bradshaw please contact Kim Watson, Media Relations Manager at MPS on +44 207 399 1428 or email kim.watson@mps.org.uk

Notes to Editor:

¹ In 2013 the GMC started investigations into 3,055 investigations of which 1,463 were closed with no further action. Source: General Medical Council, [The state of medical education and practice in the UK report: 2014](#), p63, (October 2014)

² MPS press release: GMC investigations impact on the health of 72% of doctors
<http://www.medicalprotection.org/uk/press-releases/GMC-investigations-impact-on-the-health-of-72%25-of-doctors>

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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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