

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10 December 2014

MPS encourages doctors to ensure patients understand online medical records

While the Medical Protection Society (MPS) welcomes the significant increase in the percentage of patients who can access their medical records online, it is concerned that simply providing patients with access is not enough.¹ MPS is urging doctors to also provide patients with the support they need to understand and use information safely, appropriately and effectively.

Dr Nick Clements, Head of Medical Services at MPS said:

“Patient access to online medical records has the potential to transform patient care as it can increase patient knowledge regarding the management of their health and enhance the doctor-patient partnership. It’s therefore important that doctors ensure patients understand what is written so they can share in the decision-making process.

“It can be challenging for doctors to write medical records using patient-friendly language. Doctors must consider whether specific entries could cause distress or anxiety for the patient, and may be deterred from fully documenting their diagnostic thought process, which could potentially breach their professional and contractual obligations. In addition, if doctors avoid using clinical terms and medical jargon, this could limit the usefulness of the record for other healthcare professionals.

“Doctors and patients should adopt a collaborative approach to the content of records – for example, by providing patients with tools to help them make sense of their records – to enable effective communication between professionals and ensure continuity of care.”

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact Shannon Darling, MPS Press Officer on 020 7399 1319 or shannon.darling@mps.org.uk

Notes to editor

1. NHS England, ‘21% of patients in England can now access their medical record online’, <http://www.england.nhs.uk/2014/12/08/patient-online-increase/>
2. MPS published a research report titled ‘Online medical records and the doctor-patient partnership’ in 2013, which can be accessed via <http://www.medicalprotection.org/uk/policy/reports>

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.

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.