

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

A culture of openness, committed leadership and training key to tackling ‘Open Disclosure’ challenge says MPS

1 December 2016: Transforming what is an inarguable ethical principle into an accepted ‘coal face’ practice will require a culture of openness, committed leadership and training in communication skills, the Medical Protection Society (MPS) said at an Open Disclosure event this week.

The MPS seminar for doctors and dentists, held at Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, brought the healthcare community together to look at what it can collectively do to create a more open, learning culture.

MPS believes Open Disclosure is morally and ethically right, aids the recovery process for all involved, and encourages learning and improvement. Furthermore it says open discussion can lessen the risk of patients taking action after an adverse outcome. But it recognises the challenges and works closely with its members, providing expert advice and practical tools to facilitate open communication. MPS also worked with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and State Claims Agency on the 2013 Open Disclosure guidelines.

MPS Director of Educational Services, Dr Mark Dinwoodie, said:

“We all agree that when an adverse incident occurs, patients and their families are entitled to honest, open and prompt communication, and an appropriate apology. We believe good communication and open discussion can also reduce the risk of patients taking action after an adverse event.

“But we know transforming what is an inarguable ethical principle into an accepted ‘coal face’ professional practice is very difficult, and there are some wider challenges to overcome.

“An open, learning culture at an organisational level is needed, along with leadership that is committed to Open Disclosure.

“Training in key communication skills is also important, and MPS has a number of educational programmes to help equip doctors and dentists with the skills they need to support and communicate openly with patients and their families following an adverse event.”

Dr Kathleen MacLellan, Director of Patient Safety and Clinical Effectiveness at the Department of Health, also spoke at the seminar.

Dr Kathleen MacLellan said: “Open disclosure is about building patient and public trust in the health system. Disclosure and reporting are opportunities to learn, to improve, to address errors that have happened and to apply the lessons to make the service safer for the next patient and the patient after that.”

She was joined by Cornelia Stuart, HSE Assistant National Director for the Quality Improvement Division, and Ken Mealy, Vice President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Ken Mealy said: “RCSI fully supports the concept of effective communication skills and human factor training for all doctors both in training and throughout each doctor’s medical career.

“Open disclosure policies should be an integral component of this training which should be done in a framework of empathy and openness for all patients while also supporting staff who engage with patients with these difficult issues.”

The MPS seminar ‘*Open Disclosure – Creating an Open Learning Culture in Healthcare*’, took place on 30 November.

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About MPS

The Medical Protection Society Limited (“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. Membership provides access to expert advice and support together with the right to request indemnity for complaints or claims arising from professional practice.

Our in-house experts assist with the wide range of legal and ethical problems that arise from professional practice. This can include 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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