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88% of GPs believe they are more likely to be sued now than five years ago

A Medical Protection Society (MPS) survey of 600 GP members reveals that 88% of respondents believe they are more likely to be sued now than five years ago.¹ MPS' analysis of claims also shows that GPs are more likely to be sued now than ever before and a full-time UK GP is expected to be twice as likely to receive a claim from their work this year as they were just seven years ago.²

The findings come in the same week that Michael Wade, a former Lloyd's of London insurance executive currently investigating public sector insurance schemes, questioned the affordability of clinical negligence claims to the NHS.³

The MPS survey also found:

- 35% of survey respondents had received a claim for clinical negligence during their medical career and 58% know a colleague who had.
- Of those who had received a claim, 39% received it in the last two years. This compares with 28% who had received a claim three to five years ago, 12% six to 10 years ago, 7% 11 to 15 years ago and 13% more than 15 years ago.
- Of those who believe GPs are more likely to be sued now than five years ago, 89% believe high patient expectations is the main reason, followed by the rise in media coverage of clinical negligence (88%) and workload making it difficult to provide the best care (72%).

Dr Rob Hendry, Medical Director at the Medical Protection Society said:

"Unfortunately, GPs are more likely to be sued now than ever before. We know from our own analysis that a full-time UK GP is expected to be twice as likely to receive a claim from their work this year as they were just 7 years ago".²

"Worryingly, over a typical career, the average full-time GP could now expect to receive two claims against them if our recent experience is indicative of the continuing future environment for claims against GPs."⁴

"Being sued can have a significant impact on the health of doctors, with 86% of GP survey respondents stating that their involvement in a claim impacted on their morale and 74% feeling it impacted on their confidence.

"We believe there are likely to be a number of contributing factors behind this increase in claims; the increasing complexity of care, enhanced patient expectations and a challenging and expensive legal environment.

"We are concerned about the impact the current claims environment will have on individual doctors, but also more widely on medicine. We know from recent figures that England needs 8,000 new full time equivalent GPs by 2020, and a fear of clinical negligence claims could further harm future recruitment drives."⁵

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact Shannon Darling, MPS Press Officer, on +44 (0) 20 7399 1319 or shannon.darling@mps.org.uk

Notes to editors

For more information about MPS visit our website www.mps.org.uk

1. MPS conducted a survey of GP members to find out about their experience and awareness of claims for clinical negligence and how it had impacted on them. The survey ran from 3 February 2015 to 10 February 2015 and received 600 responses.
 2. This is based on full-time UK GPs based outside of Scotland.
 3. Financial Times (February 10 2015) 'Medical negligence costs 'threat' to National Health Service'
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f4da10f6-a255-11e4-9630-00144feab7de.html#axzz3RLzNZXpL>
 4. This is based on a typical 35 year career.
 5. RCGP (8 February 2015) 'New league table reveals GP shortages across England'
<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/news/2015/february/new-league-table-reveals-gp-shortages-across-england.aspx>
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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.