

PRESS RELEASE

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MISSED OR DELAYED DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER THE MOST COMMON REASON FOR HIGH VALUE CLAIMS – MEDICAL PROTECTION

A review of Medical Protection’s top 100 high value clinical negligence claims opened in the UK in 2015 has found that alleged missed or delayed diagnosis of certain conditions commonly recurred. Of these conditions, alleged missed or delayed diagnosis of cancer was the most common and led to 16% of high value claims, followed by cauda equina syndrome (13%), meningitis and encephalitis (8%) and peripheral ischaemia (7%). Deficiencies in chronic disease management also made up 11% of the high value claims.

Although some of these conditions are more common than others, unless diagnosed and treated early, all may lead to significant and often permanent disability and care needs for the patient.

Head of Underwriting Policy at Medical Protection, Dr Nick Clements, said Medical Protection deals with a small number of significantly high value claims each year, ranging from several hundreds of thousands of pounds to multimillion pound claims:

“Doctors in the UK are practising in an increasingly challenging environment, in which we have seen a significant rise in the number and value of clinical negligence claims over a five year period. This has caused a rise in membership subscriptions for a number of different specialties, which we know has been difficult for members. Ultimately, we exist to protect members’ interests, and this is never more apparent than when they are facing a claim against them for millions of pounds.”

Commenting specifically on missed or delayed diagnosis and treatment of cancers, the most commonly recurring condition associated with high value clinical negligence claims, Dr Clements said:

“It is important for doctors to consider the possibility of malignancy, especially if a patient is not responding to a treatment as expected or continues to experience symptoms despite a presumed less serious diagnosis.

“In many cases of failure to diagnose a cancer, a thorough examination was not performed. Even if the patient has been previously examined, doctors should undertake subsequent examinations if symptoms persist, as subtle signs may otherwise be missed. We encourage doctors to ensure that there are robust systems in place so that patients do not slip through the net.”

Ends

For further information please contact Shannon Darling, Press Officer at Medical Protection on +44 207 399 1319 or email shannon.darling@medicalprotection.org

Notes to editors:

1. A comprehensive feature article on Medical Protection’s review into missed and delayed diagnosis leading to high value claims has been published in the May 2016 issue of Casebook.

About Medical Protection

Medical Protection is a trading name of The Medical Protection Society Limited (“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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