

Thyroid UK Response to Consultation – Good Medical Practice 2012

The General Medical Council launched a formal consultation to help them shape Good Medical Practice (GMP) for the future.

Good Medical Practice is the GMC's core guidance for doctors. It sets out the standards, principles and values expected of all doctors registered with the General Medical Council (GMC). It also plays a vital role in keeping patients safe and improving professional standards, and they want to ensure it remains up-to-date and relevant to doctors in their day to day practice.

The current edition of Good Medical Practice was last published in November 2006. The GMC reviews the guidance every five years to make sure it reflects current practice across the UK and reflects what doctors, patients, employers, educators and others with an interest think are important issues.

Thyroid UK has responded to the consultation.

On reading the Good Medical Practice document it concerned Thyroid UK that there were sections that were not clear enough for members of the public to understand without searching for more documentation such as legislation and examples of meaning.

In the “Apply knowledge and experience to practice section” (13c) it states, “Referring a patient to another practitioner who is accountable to a regulatory body, when this is in the patient's best interests.”

Thyroid UK suggested that this could be expanded to explain examples of “patient's best interests” or perhaps “shared decision making” could be included in this section.

In the same section (14e) it states, “Respect the patient's right to seek a second opinion.”

Thyroid UK commented, “If the doctor refuses because he thinks this is in the patient's best interests, this is paternalistic and not respecting the patient's rights to have a second opinion.”

In the “Contribute to and comply with systems to protect patients” section, (20e) it states, “Taking prompt action when problems with basic care for patients who are unable to drink, feed or clean themselves, may lead to patient safety, dignity or comfort being compromised.” The consultation question asked if they thought doctors should have a duty to act if they saw a patient at risk and we answered, “Of course they should have a duty to act.”

20g of the consultation tells doctors they should report suspected adverse drug reactions. Thyroid UK responded, "Something should be added in respect of a suspicion by a patient as well as by a doctor."

In the "Communicate effectively" section, (38) it states, "You must share all relevant information clearly and promptly with colleagues involved in your patients' care, including when making a referral. You should see the patient's consent, where necessary." We responded, "We are not sure that "where necessary" is clear enough. We have had members inform us that doctors have discussed their case without consent when there was no reason not to gain consent."

In the "Establish and maintain partnerships with patients" section (51), Thyroid UK commented, "Thyroid UK feels that doctors should support patients' choice in respect of staying in and returning to employment. It should not be a doctor's duty to encourage as some patients may feel this too paternalistic."

We also commented, "We are surprised that there is no mention of "Shared Decision Making" in this section and feel that there should be a section on this."

In the "Act with honesty and integrity" section, (79) it states, "You must be honest in financial and commercial dealings with patients, employers, insurers and other organisations or individuals, declaring any interest that you have." The consultation asked whether examples should be added and we responded that they should and gave examples of Pharma companies and Trusteeships.

There was an overall comment section in which we stated, "We are constantly told that doctors are not interested in research and information brought in by patients. It would be good to have something in the GMP regarding reading research brought in - many doctors don't have time to read all research journals."

It will be interesting to see the final copy of Good Medical Practice which Thyroid UK will be placing on their website so that patients can see this as we feel it is very important that patients are aware of this document.