



## Concerned about a colleague's performance?

Under *Good Medical Practice* doctors have a responsibility to act if they have genuine and significant concerns about the performance of a colleague.

The majority of healthcare professionals practise to a high standard. However, for a variety of reasons, such as illness, professional isolation or overwork, some individuals may be working in ways that cause concern. Colleagues are often well placed to recognise problems when they arise.

Acting on concerns about colleagues is never easy, but may be necessary to protect patient safety, which is one of our primary responsibilities as healthcare professionals.

## What is meant by a significant concern?

Significant concerns may relate to any of the following areas:

- Poor management or administration which compromise patient care
- Lack of compliance with employment law and good human resource practice
- Unacceptable behaviour (e.g. harassment or unlawful discrimination of staff or patients)
- Situations that compromise compliance with professional codes of conduct for the individual or colleagues
- Personal health problems of the practitioner leading to poor practice
- Poor clinical performance
- Ill treatment of a patient
- Suspected fraud or suspected/actual criminal offence.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other areas of concern not listed which you should consider reporting.

## Primary care

Each practice should have a clear policy on how to consider such concerns, including a named contact. You should generally contact this person, the practice manager or the senior partner of the practice in the first instance.

If you don't feel able to raise your concerns in the practice or if the problem poses a serious and/or immediate risk to patient safety, please contact the Lead Officer for handling concerns at the Primary Care Trust.

## Secondary care

Each Acute Trust should have a clear policy on how to consider such concerns but usually you should contact the clinical director of the unit or failing that the medical director in confidence.

## **For doctors in training**

The trainer, clinical supervisor or programme director/course organiser should be contacted in the first instance.

### **Resource**

[Whistleblowing in the NHS. HSC 1999/198. Department of Health.](#)