

In this issue...

Complaints and how to deal with them

Welcome to the NSW Medical Council's new-look newsletter.

NSW medical practitioners have high professional standards and the respect in which the public holds us is a testament to that.

The Council's role is to protect the public from unsafe practice and to maintain the community's confidence in the medical profession.

All doctors worry about a complaint being made about them to the Medical Council or the Health Care Complaints Commission. We appreciate how stressful this can be. Thankfully, fewer than 6% of doctors are the subject of a complaint each year.

In this issue, we look at the types of complaints we receive, what happens to them, and ways you might reduce the chance of having a complaint made about you.

It is worth noting that poor health or an unbalanced lifestyle are often contributing factors in creating the circumstances that result in a complaint being made. So, please look after yourself by allowing a trusted colleague to look after you.

Greg Kesby, President, Medical Council of NSW

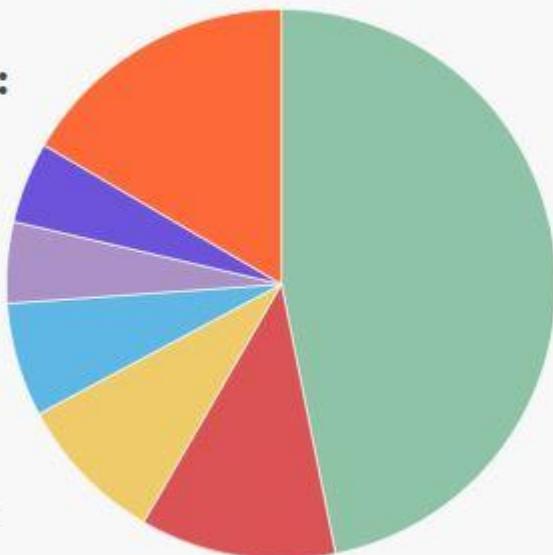
Focus on... *COMPLAINTS*

Common complaints about doctors (2016-17)

Total complaints:

2282

Complaints received by the Medical Council 2016-17



- Clinical care ● Medicines and prescribing ● Communication issues
- Medical records and certificates ● Physical or sexual boundaries
- Doctors own health ● Other

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Hot button issues

There are a few topics that we hear about frequently. Here's a few resources to help

you avoid a complaint in those areas:

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Could saying 'sorry' stop the pain?

Sometimes things go wrong.

Doctors see it every day – a dire outcome to a simple procedure, a misdiagnosis or a delay in treatment. A good doctor who's had a bad day.

Often, a distressed patient may just want an incident to be acknowledged. The way a doctor responds could be the tipping point as to whether or not they lodge a formal complaint requiring a stressful investigation by medical regulators.

There are a few things you should know about saying sorry ...

[READ MORE](#)

Top 5 tips if a complaint is made about you

No matter how thorough you are in your medical practice, it's possible that at some point someone will complain about you. If that happens, the Health Care Complaints Commission or NSW Medical Council will contact with you. Don't panic!

Here's five tips for dealing with a complaint:

1. Ring your medical indemnity insurer for support and advice.
2. Do not try to contact the complainant once a formal complaint has been made.
3. Get help writing your response letter.
4. Don't ignore what's happening.
5. Seek personal support.

[**READ MORE ABOUT EACH TIP**](#)



FAQs

Q. I'm a GP and see hundreds of patients each month. Does that mean there's a high risk someone will complain about me?

Q. What happens to most complaints?

[**SEE THE ANSWERS**](#)

Poll: My greatest fear about a complaint about me is:

My colleagues and patients will find out

I don't trust the Health Care Complaints Commission or Medical Council to be fair

I will be found to have done something wrong

My practice will be restricted

I will lose my registration

Financial concerns

Other

All responses are anonymous. We'll share the results in our next newsletter.

[**TELL US YOUR CONCERN**](#)

Good practice



Confidence, competence and getting it wrong!

Clinical confidence doesn't just happen! Every doctor faces times when they question their judgement, know they've made a mistake or should have referred a patient much earlier.

This excellent article by Dr Jon Fogarty urges doctors to accept their humanity and acknowledge their failings, without beating themselves up.

[**READ MORE**](#)

Profile



Helping the healers ...

Everyone needs help sometime, and doctors aren't immune!

Health problems, money worries and poor work conditions all create stress that destroys personal well-being and happiness.

Help is available. We talk to *Ms Sarah Foster* and *Prof Garry Walter* from the **Doctors' Health Advisory Service**.

[READ MORE](#)

New & useful ...

- Working with pain now codeine's been upscheduled: [NPS MedicineWise Australia](#)
- Privacy breaches – new laws: [Is your practice ready?](#)
- Report: [Mental health consumers and use of restraints and seclusion in medical settings](#)
- Guidelines: [Medicinal cannabis](#)
- Online training: [Improving clinical outcomes for people who use drugs](#)

For your calendar



Public health prevention conference

- 2-4 May

Focus on preventing illness and disease!

Venue: Sydney Boulevard Hotel, 90 William St, Sydney.

[Register](#)

Pain Management in practice

- 3-4 May

Expand your skills in managing patients' pain.

Venue: Mecure Sydney, 818 George St, Sydney.

[Register](#)



What would you like to read about?

How can we make this e-news useful to you? Please drop us an email with your ideas, feedback and suggestions for regular features to the [Communications Team](#).



Medical Council of NSW

PO Box 104, Gladesville, NSW 1675

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