



Escalation Policy for Mentors with Concerns

As laid out in the Mentor-Mentee Agreement, discussion between mentor and mentee must take place in confidence. This is true except where patient safety or the duty of candour supersedes this.¹

This document is a guide to when a mentor needs to forego their confidential obligations to a mentee.

The General Medical Council states in Good Medical Practice that:

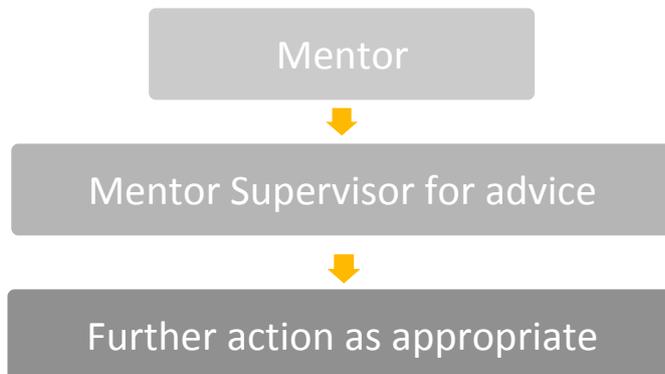
- You should be willing to take on a mentoring role for more junior doctors and other healthcare professionals.²
- You must support colleagues who have problems with their performance or health. However patient safety is paramount and a clinician's primary priority in all situations.²

When breaching this confidential relationship, the mentee should be informed that you're obliged to discuss the content of a conversation due to your duty of care and/or candour.

Discuss:

- Why you feel the information should be disclosed.
- Re-visit the details outlined in the mentor-mentee agreement.
- Who should disclose the information and how this will be done.
- If there is disagreement you should outline what you are going to say, when you intend to say and to whom.³
- Seek guidance from the mentor supervisor.

Escalation Flow Chart



The Role of the Mentor Supervisor

The Mentor Supervisor is there as a source of confidential advice and support for the mentors. They can be consulted when the mentor is having difficulty with a mentee or requires advice regarding further escalation of an issue. This role is also confidential and the mentor may ask for advice without explicit permission from the mentee but will attempt to make this as anonymous as possible. The mentor supervisor should not approach the mentee regarding information discussed with them.

Disclosing information to a mentee's clinical or educational supervisor

This should only be done when absolutely necessary where you feel the issue is serious and will have significant consequences regarding the mentee's or patient safety. This should only be done after first suggesting that the mentee discuss the issue themselves. If they feel unable to do this with their own supervisors (they do not feel comfortable or the issue is with the trainer themselves) suggest an alternative consultant in the department with whom they feel comfortable or the TPD if appropriate.

Only disclose information to a CS or AES after discussing the issue with the mentee and your mentor supervisor.

Patient Safety Concerns

The GMC guidance states 'Raising and acting on concerns about patient safety (2012) sets out our expectation that all doctors will, whatever their role, take appropriate action to raise and act on concerns about patient care, dignity and safety.' In addition, the GMC advises:

- Your duty to report overrides personal and professional loyalties
- You can raise concern without a burden of proof
- Whistleblowing is legally protected

When mentoring you may come across situations where patient safety issues may be raised. The issue should be discussed and the mentee should follow their local trust guidance. You can refer to the GMC document Ethical Guidance and raising concerns to help them.

Fitness to Practice Concerns

The GMC define fitness to practice in the following ways:

1. To practise safely, doctors must be competent in what they do. They must establish and maintain effective relationships with patients, respect patients' autonomy and act responsibly and appropriately if they or a colleague fall ill and their performance suffers.
2. But these attributes, while essential, are not enough. Doctors have a respected position in society and their work gives them privileged access to patients, some of whom may be very vulnerable. A doctor whose conduct has shown that he cannot justify the trust placed in him should not continue in unrestricted practice while that remains the case.
3. In short, the public is entitled to expect that their doctor is fit to practise, and follows our principles of good practice described in Good medical practice. It sets out the standards of competence, care and conduct expected of doctors.⁴

Fitness to Practice Concerns

Where a mentee's repeated conduct or health is such that patient safety is compromised:

1. Discuss the issues with the mentee.
2. Contact the mentor supervisor.

Concerns about a mentee's physical or mental health

Early recognition and implementation of support is necessary to reduce the need for serious intervention. Many doctors experience a degree of stress or burnout at some time in their career and you should be aware of the symptoms and signs and offer support. Signpost them to the resources leaflet.

Sometimes a mentee's mental health may not improve or may quickly deteriorate. The mentor should attempt to discuss the issues and urge the trainee to seek support. This can be in the form of family, friends or formal medical or psychological help. They may wish to discuss the issues with their educational or clinical supervisors.

If their physical or mental health is such that patient safety is jeopardised, discuss this with them and the mentor should encourage the mentee to self-refer. If the mentee refuses to self-refer and patient safety is potentially compromised, discuss this urgently with the mentor supervisor and their educational supervisor (or another trainer in the same trust if the AES is unavailable).

If you feel that your mentee is at immediate serious risk to themselves or others (i.e. patients or public) you should break confidentiality to the authorities that the specific situation requires.

Resources Leaflet

Sometimes, you may have concerns about your mentee that do not necessarily warrant a breach of confidentiality but may indicate that they require extra support. You may wish to signpost a mentee to the resources available in the resources leaflet.

References

1. Royal College of Surgeons of England; Mentoring, a guide to good practice. Electronic handbook. https://heeo.ee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/docustore/rcs_-_mentoring_a_guide_to_good_practice.pdf
2. GMC Good Medical Practice. Domain three – Communication, partnership and teamwork https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/good-medical-practice---english-1215_pdf-51527435.pdf Page 15
3. Mentoring and Coaching. David Clutterbuck partnership. What do we mean by confidentiality in mentoring? <https://www.davidclutterbuckpartnership.com/what-do-we-mean-by-confidentiality-in-mentoring/>
4. GMC The Meaning of Fitness to Practice. Published April 2014 | Date for review April 2019. Code: GMC/MFTP/0414 https://www.gmc-uk.org/media/documents/DC4591_The_meaning_of_fitness_to_practise_25416562.pdf