

PE1552/A

General Medical Council Scotland Letter of 8 April 2015

8 April 2015
Public Petitions Clerks
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Peat

Consideration of Petition PE1552

Thank you for your letter dated 11 March 2015 inviting the General Medical Council to share its views on Petition PE2552 *Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge to Scottish Government to reform cancer treatment to ensure there is a choice of treatments including electromedicine*.

The General Medical Council (GMC) is an independent organisation that helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice across the UK.

- We decide which doctors are qualified to work here and we oversee UK medical education and training.
- We set the standards that doctors need to follow, and make sure that they continue to meet these standards throughout their careers.
- We take action to prevent a doctor from putting safety of patients, or the public's confidence in doctors, at risk.

Every patient should receive a high standard of care. Our role is to help achieve that by working closely with doctors, their employers and patients, to make sure that the trust patients have in their doctors is fully justified.

Firstly can I highlight that the GMC is unable to offer guidance on clinical decisions; as such it is out with our remit to comment on particular treatments. However we do have a range of guidance on the standards of care expected of doctors.

Our standards define what makes a good doctor by setting out the professional values, knowledge, skills and behaviours required of all doctors working in the UK.

We consult with a wide range of people, including patients, doctors, employers and educators to develop our standards and guidance.

The core professional standards expected of all doctors are set out in *Good Medical Practice* which covers fundamental aspects of a doctor's role, including working in partnership with patients and treating them with respect. We provide detailed guidance on ethical principles that most doctors will use every day, such as consent and confidentiality, and specific guidance on a range of areas such as raising concerns about patient safety, doctors' child protection responsibilities, and providing care for people who are dying. We also develop case scenarios and tools that help doctors apply the principles in their practice.

Serious or persistent failure to follow our guidance will put a doctor's registration at risk.

In this light, I thought it would be helpful to highlight the relevant paragraphs of our core guidance, *Good Medical Practice*.

Paragraph 16 includes provisions that doctors must:

- Prescribe drugs or treatment, including repeat prescriptions, only when they have adequate knowledge of the patient's health and are satisfied that the drugs or treatment serve the patient's needs.
- Provide effective treatments based on the best available evidence.
- Respect the patient's right to seek a second opinion.

Paragraph 18 states that doctors must make good use of the resources available to them.

Paragraph 31 says that doctors must listen to patients, take account of their views, and respond honestly to their questions.

Paragraphs 46-52 set expectations for doctors to establish and maintain partnerships with patients. Specifically:

- *Paragraph 48* says doctors must work in partnership with patients, sharing with them the information they will need to make decisions about their care, including (but not limited to):
 - Their condition, its likely progression and the options for treatment, including associated risks and uncertainties

I hope that this is helpful. If you would like to discuss in further detail please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Carson
Head of Scottish Affairs