

Protecting patients *your rights as lesbian, gay and bisexual people*



Stonewall

**General
Medical
Council**

Regulating doctors
Ensuring good medical practice

Protecting patients *your rights as lesbian, gay and bisexual people*

Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and health. This includes lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) patients and their families. They have the same rights as anyone else to safe, effective, and appropriate care.

The General Medical Council (GMC) sets out the principles of good practice in our core guidance to doctors, *Good Medical Practice*.

We tell doctors:

'You must not unfairly discriminate against [patients] by allowing your personal views... about sexual orientation... to affect adversely your professional relationship with them or the treatment you provide or arrange.'

'... You must not express to your patients your personal beliefs, including political, religious or moral beliefs, in ways that exploit their vulnerability or that are likely to cause them distress.'

This guidance applies to doctors' personal beliefs about sexual orientation.



How doctors should work with you

Doctors should work with you to reach decisions about your care that are right for you. They should treat you as an individual; and respect your dignity and your right to confidentiality. If they do not, they will be breaching our guidance. It is also unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 for doctors to discriminate unfairly against you.

Stonewall (the lesbian, gay and bisexual charity) have told us that LGB people have sometimes found that doctors have:

- failed either to examine or to respond to a patient properly, for example they have not been willing to offer a smear test to lesbians
- told others that a patient is gay, when this had nothing to do with their treatment
- refused to accept someone as a patient because of their sexuality
- made offensive or discriminatory comments about LGB sexuality.

If you have experienced anything like this, you may want to talk to someone to try to prevent it happening again.

What you can do if you are concerned

Remember, you have a right to complain if you have faced discrimination. First, contact the place where you received care, because this is the best way to settle complaints quickly. The GMC can take action if we need to stop doctors from practising or to restrict their practice in some way. Both local organisations and the GMC need to know who you are if we are to investigate your concerns. It will be difficult to go ahead if you want to remain anonymous.

If you think your doctor is not fit to practise, or may be a risk to patients, then please contact us by:

- ringing our helpline on 0161 923 6602; or
- emailing us at gmc@gmc-uk.org; or
- writing to us at the General Medical Council Fitness to Practise Directorate, 3 Hardman Street, Manchester M3 3AW.

We have a useful leaflet, *How to complain about a doctor*, that explains what happens when you make a complaint and gives examples of the types of cases upon which we may need to act. It also contains a form for you to fill in. The leaflet is on our website at www.gmc-uk.org, or you can ask for a copy by calling our helpline on 0161 923 6602 or by emailing publications@gmc-uk.org.

If you decide to make a complaint, we will review it carefully and respond to you as quickly as we can.

Above all, we promise to treat you fairly and equally.



Remember:

- You have the same rights as everyone else
- Make sure you understand your rights as a patient
- Try to resolve your complaint locally
- If you think your doctor is not fit to practise, or may be a risk to patients, then contact the GMC

GMC Helpline 0161 923 6602

Further reading

GMC

How to complain about a doctor: A guide for patients

Good Medical Practice

Treatment and care towards the end of life: good practice in decision making

Consent guidance: patients and doctors making decisions together

Stonewall

The colour of your money: A guide to goods and services

Living Together: British attitudes towards lesbian and gay people

The Department of Health

An introduction to working with lesbian, gay and bisexual people: Information for health and social care staff



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www.stonewall.org.uk

www.gmc-uk.org

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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