LETTERS

GMC AND INDEPENDENT TRAINING REVIEW

Does the GMC think it's immune to its own guidance regarding candour?

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Dean has established the true degree of independence and transparency of the GMC's Greenaway report.¹ That this hasn't sent shock waves through the medical establishment attests to the nature of the relations between the GMC, the Department of Health, and medical education quangos. Dean's findings may reflect a pattern of behaviour at the GMC that does not favour candour.

The recent report on deaths of doctors while under investigation, commissioned by the GMC, was in fact an internal review, despite the GMC calling it "independent."² Similarly, in March the GMC press released a study with the headline: "New research finds that GMC decisions are fair to doctors under investigation."³ The research was billed as independent yet commissioned and paid for by the GMC. The report examined how GMC processes were followed by interviewing GMC fitness to practise staff but not any doctors under investigation. How can the report conclude that GMC decisions are fair to doctors?

Another GMC press release said that a major consultation by the GMC had "found strong support for proposals to deal with the small number of doctors who put patients at significant risk or cause them harm."⁴ Serious concerns were raised about the process, which the GMC has not acknowledged.⁵ The consultation required doctors to identify themselves, which is hardly likely to encourage critical responses from a profession already suspicious of their regulator. Approximately 0.1% of registered medical practitioners responded, and the BMA's response was negative in many questions posed. So how the GMC can claim "strong support" is a mystery.

The duty of candour requires doctors to tell the whole truth and not leave out important salient facts—in short, not to mislead. One would arguably expect the regulator to hold itself to a stricter standard of conduct with the press and public. Section 72 of Good Medical Practice (2013) states, "You must make sure that any evidence you give or documents you write or sign are not false or misleading. (a) You must take reasonable steps to check the information. (b) You must not deliberately leave out relevant information."

Maybe the GMC sees itself immune to its own guidance regarding candour. But if it doesn't set an example, how can it expect its registrants to take its guidance seriously?

Competing interests: None declared.

Full response at: www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h2400/rr-5.

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