Discounted legal advice on business matters

MDDUS has announced a new partnership with law firm Capsticks Solicitors LLP to support GP and practice manager members in England and Wales. Capsticks will provide a host of benefits including up to 20 minutes of free business and corporate legal advice, as well as access to a full range of practice and business legal services at specially discounted rates.

MDDUS Director of Development, David Sturgeon said: “Our members already have access to expert medico-legal advice from our team of highly-skilled advisers and lawyers. We are delighted to work alongside Capsticks to ensure that our members’ needs will be enhanced further with access to advice on non-indemnity issues.”

GPs and practice managers will be able to call on Capsticks to provide discounted legal assistance on issues such as property advice, practice mergers and acquisitions, partnership agreements and disputes, and primary care contracts. MDDUS members can also get advice in relation to CQC inspections and health and safety issues.

Sam Hopkins, Capsticks partner and head of the firm’s GP legal support team, commented: "We are very excited to be working in partnership with MDDUS and look forward to supporting their GP and practice manager members with their non-indemnity legal issues during what is a particularly challenging time.”

Find out more in the Advice & Support section of mddus.com

Treating transgender patients

TRANSGENDER people and those with gender incongruence could make up to 1 per cent of patients. It is well understood that these patients have complex healthcare needs, including a greater incidence of depression and risk of suicide. Access to appropriate healthcare is compounded by long waiting times to see specialists for gender reassignment treatment.

In March of this year, the GMC published new advice to help doctors support transgender patients. It is based on core guidance from Good Medical Practice and is also informed by relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010. The advice followed publication of a report on transgender equality by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee. The report said doctors and other health professionals often lacked an understanding of how to provide effective care for transgender patients, including referring pathways and their own roles in prescribing treatment.

MDDUS has certainly seen an increase in calls from members seeking advice and guidance on treating people with gender dysphoria, and they are often concerned about delays in accessing appropriate specialist help. Many doctors have and will have transgender persons as patients but few doctors are well equipped to deal with the issues that arise. Currently medical training does not produce doctors skilled in transgender health.

There are specific risks associated with meeting the healthcare needs of transgender persons and two areas in particular are:
- Patients who self-medicate from unregulated sources.
- The risk of self-harm due to the inherent increased risk in this group, along with the added effect of delays in accessing appropriate care.

In relation to the first point, patients may seek bridging prescriptions until they are seen by a specialist. In these circumstances, GPs may feel out of their depth and worry that they risk acting outside their level of competence and expertise. Regarding the second point, any patient with significant mental health issues may need referral to appropriate mental health services.

It is helpful that the GMC has entered the discussion, when many doctors who are not specialists in this field have questions about their roles and responsibilities. The GMC reminds all doctors that in relation to transgender patients:

“Do your best to understand your patient’s views and preferences and the adverse outcomes they are most concerned about. It may well be that the risk to your patient of continuing to self-medicate with hormones is greater than the risk to them if you initiate hormone therapy before they’re assessed by a specialist.”

In regard to bridging prescriptions, a matter which generates a significant proportion of calls to MDDUS, the GMC has issued specific guidance (go to http://tinyurl.com/grugw8z).

It is important that all doctors dealing with the health issues of patients with gender dysphoria understand and follow the regulator’s advice. The GMC guidance also provides useful links, including an e-learning module produced by the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs).

Dr Gail Gilmartin is risk and medical adviser at MDDUS

IN BRIEF

DENTAL TRAINING DAY
MDDUS will be running another dental training day on 20 September 2016 in Glasgow. Dental adviser Aubrey Craig will headline a varied group of expert speakers discussing key dento-legal issues. Attendees can earn 5.5 hours of CPD accredited by NHS Education Scotland. Find out more at risk@mddus.com

CALLING ALL GPST GROUPS
Apply for a personalised webinar by the risk education team at MDDUS. Workshops for groups of up to 50 GPST members are being offered in which participants can ask questions, share experiences and take part in polls offering valuable instant feedback. Sessions can be arranged to suit your group.

Popular topics include managing complaints, avoiding missed diagnoses and prescribing risks.

Email risk@mddus.com

MDDUS PODCASTS Our risk team has produced a series of five podcasts based on the fictitious