

12 May 2008

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London NW1 3JNTelephone: 0845 357 8001
Facsimile: 020 7189 5001
Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
www.gmc-uk.org

Dear |

Thank you for your letter of 1 May 2008, addressed to Sir Graeme Catto, which has been passed to the Standards and Ethics Section to respond.

As the statutory regulator of doctors in the UK, we publish guidance on the broad standards and principles that we expect them to adhere to in all aspects of their practice. As our guidance is applicable to all doctors it is necessarily broad in nature and does not address specific clinical situations. We expect doctors to use their professional judgement to apply the principles contained in our guidance to the circumstances they encounter in their work. Doctors should be prepared to explain and justify their actions if called upon to do so. Serious or persistent failures to follow our guidance may place a doctor's registration at risk.

Our core guidance document *Good Medical Practice* (copy enclosed) describes the principles and values upon which good practice is based. It states that the primary duty of all doctors is to make the care of their patient their first concern. This applies regardless of the circumstances, including when a doctor is preparing a report for a third party. Furthermore paragraph 7 of *GMP* states:

...You must treat your patients with respect whatever their life choices and beliefs. You must not unfairly discriminate against them by allowing your personal views to affect adversely your professional relationship with them or the treatment you provide or arrange...

We expect doctors to communicate effectively with their patients. Paragraph 22a of *GMP* states that doctors must:

Listen to patients, ask for and respect their views about their health, and respond to their concerns and preferences.

Whilst we cannot advise on the practices of the DWP, we do advise doctors that they should keep up to date with and be familiar with relevant guidelines that affect their work. In our guidance on issues relating to confidentiality (copy enclosed) we advise that doctors

should normally allow patients an opportunity to read reports that they have prepared for third parties (see paragraph 17).

As we have a role in considering complaints we must be careful to remain impartial. Therefore, we are unable to comment on specific cases outside of our complaints process. However, if you are concerned that a doctor is acting contrary to our guidance you can of course make a formal complaint to us.

I hope that this clarifies the GMC's position on the issues that you have raised.

Yours sincerely

