

# Keeping it Professional

Making sure you avoid the pitfalls of overstepping the mark.

Patient complaints can arise for a number of reasons. There might be valid concerns about your behaviour, your fitness to practice or your standards of care. Sometimes complaints are made because a lack of information or explanation has caused a misunderstanding between you. Occasionally a malicious or vexatious complaints might be made. In any case, allegations of unprofessional behaviour can be extremely upsetting. Read the key points in this advice briefing and follow the links to find out more detailed information.

## Patient Information

- ✓ Make sure you provide your patients with clear and concise information so that they understand what their physiotherapy sessions are all about.
- ✓ A good patient information leaflet about your service/department can be sent in advance or displayed in your waiting area and may save you time.
- ✓ Tell your patient clearly if they will be expected to undress and give them suggestions on appropriate clothing, including suitable underwear to attend in

## Patient Consent

- ✓ You must tell the patient all the risks and benefits of the proposed treatment and answer all the questions they have, whether you think them relevant or not.
- ✓ Remind your patient that they can withdraw consent at any time
- ✓ Tick boxes or writing the word 'consent' followed by a tick is meaningless and should not be used. Consent is evidenced by demonstrating that some form of conversation took place with the patient during which their concerns and your professional judgment based on your assessment was discussed. A good clinical record will show this.
- ✓ Be alert – if the patient's body language indicates he/she is uncomfortable, stop and ask again if they are Ok with how you are treating them.
- ✓ Read Information Paper "*Consent*"  
<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/consent>

## Chaperoning and related issues

- ✓ Always offer access to a suitable chaperone for close and intimate examinations.
- ✓ Always record in your records if your patient refuses a chaperone.
- ✓ You may decline to perform intimate or close examinations without a chaperone if you

- believe one is needed for your own or your patient's best interests.
- ✓ Ensure patients have their privacy and dignity protected at all times during a treatment session.
- ✓ Read CSP Information Paper *Chaperoning and Related Issues*  
<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/chaperoning-related-issues>

## Professional Boundaries

- ✓ Do not share personal information about yourself.
- ✓ It is never acceptable to express feelings of a sexual nature to your patient
- ✓ Be wary of patients that try to befriend you. Be courteous but always return your conversation to their clinical requirements.
- ✓ Do not give or accept social invitations
- ✓ Consider your use of social media carefully.
- ✓ Do not visit a patient's home unannounced and without a prior appointment
- ✓ If a patient displays sexualised behaviour to you, remind them that your relationship is professional. Always notify your manager and arrange for the patient to be transferred to a colleague. Record the transfer of clinician, with date and reason in the patient's notes. If this is not possible, arrange a chaperone.
- ✓ We strongly discourage you from having sexual relationships with former patients or their carers. However consensual a relationship appears to be, if a complaint is made the onus is on you to prove you have not exploited that person under the circumstances.
- ✓ Read *Clear sexual boundaries between healthcare professionals and patients: responsibilities of healthcare professionals* from the Professional Standards Authority  
<http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/publications/our-standards>