

## Societies and organisations

This chapter introduces you to some of the societies and organisations that you may be in contact with throughout your medical career. The information has been written and/or approved by the organisations involved, which accounts for the slight variation in style and consistency of the writing; however, it ensures that information was correct at the time of print.

### GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL

**Main roles: accountability, discipline, registration, advice**

The General Medical Council (GMC) has the legal power to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the community by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine.

The responsibilities of the GMC are listed below.

- Co-ordinates all stages and promotes high standards in medical association.
- Provisionally registers graduates of UK medical schools.
- Publishes guidance on general clinical training and its implementation.
- Grants full registration to doctors who gain the required competencies.
- Maintains a list and publishes a register of specialist doctors and, in the future, a list of GPs.
- Recognises qualifications awarded by EEA member states to EEA nationals.
- Regulates doctors.

The GMC website contains the guidelines mentioned above. These guidelines are useful and important in your education and practice throughout medical school. Other areas covered by the guidelines include consent of patients and conduct as a health professional (and medical student).

**Website:** [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

General  
Medical  
Council

Regulating doctors  
Ensuring good medical practice

### POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

**Main roles: postgraduate medical education and training**

The Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) is an independent

PMETB

regulatory body, responsible for promoting the development of postgraduate medical education across the UK.

It began operations on 30 September 2005, taking over the responsibilities of the Specialist Training Authority (STA) of the medical royal colleges and the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice (JCPTGP).

The vision that PMETB has set itself is to achieve excellence in postgraduate medical education, training, assessment and accreditation throughout the UK to improve the knowledge, skills and experience of doctors and the health and health-care of patients and the public.

The General and Specialist Medical Practice (Education, Training and Qualifications) Order 2003 (Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1250) established the PMETB and defines its purpose – to develop postgraduate medical education and training.

PMETB's responsibilities at the time of print include:<sup>1</sup>

- certifying doctors for the GP and specialist registers
- prospective approval of all training posts that lead to the award of a CCT
- approving specialist training curricula and assessments
- setting the overarching principles under which selection into specialist training must operate.

However, there is a plan to merge the GMC and PMETB, creating a body called PGMET. At the time of print little more information is available, so look out for this and the remit for this new body.

**Website:** [www.pmetb.org.uk](http://www.pmetb.org.uk)

## BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

### Main roles: advice, protection (of rights)

The British Medical Association (BMA) is the professional association for all UK doctors, and an independent trade union that is recognised by the government as a scientific and educational body, with sole negotiating rights for doctors. As such, it represents doctors from all branches of medicine all over the UK, and has over 135 000 members, including over 16 000 student members.

The main aims of the BMA are to protect and support its members' professional interests and to negotiate with the government and NHS employers to bring about improvements in the profession and the NHS.

Student members receive a monthly copy of *StudentBMJ*, containing interesting political, lifestyle and educational articles, and opinions of medical students, accompanied by *Student BMA News*, featuring news, views and analysis.

For full details on the benefits of membership, visit the BMA website.

**Website:** [www.bma.org.uk/\\_top/join\\_bma/index.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/_top/join_bma/index.jsp)



## MEDICAL DEFENCE UNION

### Main roles: advice, protection

The Medical Defence Union (MDU) is a mutual, non-profit organisation, owned by its members – doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals. Established in 1885, the MDU was the first medical defence organisation in the UK and provides members with advice and support throughout their studies and professional lives. As well as providing all the traditional discretionary benefits of a mutual, the MDU also provides its qualified members with the security of an insurance policy for indemnity up to £10 million.<sup>2</sup>



Other benefits of membership include:

- indemnity for Good Samaritan acts performed worldwide
- access to Freephone 24-hour advisory helpline
- discounted books, courses and educational services
- defence of professional reputations if clinical performance is called into question
- support in responding to patient complaints
- support with GMC or NHS disciplinary proceedings
- access to the MDU press office assisting with enquiries from the media
- access to case histories and advisory publications within the MDU website.

For further information about the benefits of MDU membership visit the website or contact the Membership Helpline on 0800 716376.

**Website:** [www.the-mdu.com](http://www.the-mdu.com)

## MEDICAL AND DENTAL DEFENCE UNION OF SCOTLAND

### Main roles: advice, protection, risk management

The Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS) is an independent UK-wide mutual indemnity organisation providing members with comprehensive indemnity and 24-hour advice and support.



Currently, the MDDUS has 25 000 members and is managed and governed by medical and dental practitioners. The aims of the MDDUS are to protect the professional interests of its members and to promote high standards of medical and dental practice.

Members have 24/7 access to clinically qualified medical advisers, uniquely experienced professionals with extensive understanding of the variety of situations encountered. This enables all situations to be managed sympathetically, effectively and in strict confidence.

Other services provided for members include:

- occurrence-based indemnity and support for legal action brought about by patients against general medical practitioners and specialists in private practice
- assistance with complaints

- professional advice and legal representation at GMC proceedings
- legal representation at fatal accident inquiries and coroner's inquests
- indemnity for assisting at emergencies and other occasions such as voluntary hospice work and worldwide Good Samaritan acts
- representation at disciplinary proceedings
- quarterly publication, *Summons*
- access to risk management advice in general medical practice
- advice and indemnity for the preparation of reports and expert opinions
- continued indemnity, after the member has ceased clinical practice, or left membership, for the period that they were in membership
- the option to put membership on hold if not working due to retirement, maternity leave or ill health – indemnity for Good Samaritan acts and *Summons* are still provided free of charge.

Membership costs depend upon specialty and length of practice, for advice on this you can contact the MDDUS. However, free membership is available to medical and dental students throughout the UK. Student membership provides benefits, including:

- free elective indemnity and a 'Guide to Electives'
- free advice booklets on topical medico-legal and practice issues
- quarterly publication, *Summons*, includes case studies and student pages
- discount on clinical textbooks from specified publishers, see the MDDUS website for further details
- involvement and sponsorship of student events, see the MDDUS website for further details.

**Website:** [www.mddus.com](http://www.mddus.com)

### **MEDICAL FORUM**

Medical Forum is an independent 'career management facility' where doctors of all ages and backgrounds can explore their career concerns, situation, options and decisions. Medical Forum will help you to handle anything from a simple career choice through to more complex career dilemmas or crises. Medical Forum do not only offer career change advice but also, they work with consultants, GPs and trainees who are in post and not intending to change but who are facing career challenges. Not only this, if you are searching for new challenges, Medical Forum can help you to find them.

You can self refer to Medical Forum or you may be referred via deaneries, tutors or other medical organisations. For Medical Forum to work for you, you must be willing to learn and take charge of your career. They will not tell you what to do, but will help you to find this out for yourself.

If you would like to make full use of the services on offer from Medical Forum a charge will apply; however, you can decide which of the services may be of use to you for free by visiting website. The website provides free access to some services and

will allow you to obtain further information on all that is on offer.

**Website:** [www.medicalforum.com](http://www.medicalforum.com)

### **MEDICAL PROTECTION SOCIETY**

**Main roles: advice, protection**



**MEDICAL PROTECTION SOCIETY**

The Medical Protection Society (MPS) prides itself on being the world's leading mutual medical protection organisation. It has the aim of providing help, in the form of protection and advice, to healthcare professionals with medico-legal problems that arise from their clinical practice.

A 24-hour telephone emergency advice line is offered. Services provided by the MPS are confidential. Specific and general situations that MPS members can ask for assistance with, include:

- clinical negligence claims
- complaints
- legal and ethical dilemmas
- GMC inquiries
- disciplinary procedures
- inquests and fatal accident inquiries
- police investigations relating to clinical practice.

In addition to assisting healthcare professionals with the above situations, the MPS also:

- has a role in risk management – working to promote safer practice
- lobbies to bring about a sensible regulatory environment
- can provide indemnity
- can provide legal representation
- can act as a spokesperson to the media.

The assistance offered by the MPS is given at the discretion of the MPS council, which consists mainly of medical and dental practitioners.

The MPS publishes a really useful journal, *Casebook*, as part of its work in promoting patient safety. *Casebook* is sent out to all MPS members and contains educational articles, letters and a really useful section that details previous cases where legal action has been sought. This latter section details the history of the case and what the outcome was. It then goes on to explain where errors occurred or what was good about the management. It is a really interesting tool that draws your attention to errors that have easily been made, but are potentially easy to avoid.

**Website:** [www.mps.org.uk](http://www.mps.org.uk)

### **HOWDEN MEDICAL INSURANCE SERVICES**

**Main roles: advice, protection**

Complaints and allegations of negligence or poor



performance against medical practitioners are undoubtedly on the rise. On average a dentist or doctor is expected to receive one formal complaint for every two years they are in practice. Howden Medical Insurance Services (HMIS) is a new commercial company. However, the professional and medical risks division of Howden Insurance Brokers prides itself in having longstanding expertise in the field of medical malpractice. Doctors and dentists need to know that they have an indemnity insurance that is secure, reliable and supported by fully trained and experienced medico-legal experts. Backed by a consortium of London insurers, the HMIS team of medical, dental and claims specialists has launched a service tailored to meet the individual needs of dentists and doctors. HMIS provides cover for groups or individuals including: health authorities, medical associations, medical training colleges/universities, hospitals (public and private sector), clinics, medical practitioners (doctors, dentists, surgeons, chiropractors, osteopaths), other medical professionals (opticians, paramedics, pharmacists, nurses, chiropodists) and complementary medical practitioners (acupuncturists, homeopaths).

The cover HMIS offers may include:

- public and products liability
- protection against libel and slander
- cover for loss of documents
- supplementary legal expenses cover
- access to a range of helplines
- a range of 'run off' options.

**Website:** [www.hmis.co.uk](http://www.hmis.co.uk)

## WESLEYAN MEDICAL SICKNESS

**Main roles: financial advice, income protection**



**Medical Sickness**

Have you ever thought about what you would do if accident or illness prevented you from working and earning an income? The Medical Career Protector from Wesleyan Assurance Society is specifically designed for medical students and doctors. Exclusively provided through Wesleyan Medical Sickness, it is designed to protect your income should you suffer loss of earnings as a result of illness or accident. As a final-year medical student they can arrange cover for you free of charge, as they understand it is cover that you may not be able to afford. Then when you qualify as a doctor, under £30 per month will help to provide the cover you'll need in the early years of your career. In 2004 the Society paid over £36 million pounds in claims to doctors and dentists who were unable to work.

Wesleyan Medical Sickness has a dedicated team of student liaison managers covering medical schools across the UK who can provide information about and access to the cover. In addition they can provide sponsorship to school clubs, societies and events such as your Graduation Ball. They will also be co-ordinating your group photo – a tradition that Wesleyan Medical Sickness has upheld for over 30 years. Medical Sickness gives this photo to each and every final-year student, as a free gift from them, to remind you of your years at medical school.

Wesleyan Medical Sickness has been addressing the needs of medics since 1884 and is part of the Wesleyan Assurance Society, one of the oldest and financially strong mutual organisations in the UK. They also offer a wide range of insurance products for students, covering elective travel, motor and personal possessions.

**Website:** [www.wesleyan.co.uk](http://www.wesleyan.co.uk)

### MEDICAL WOMEN'S FEDERATION

**Main roles: advice, representation of women in medicine**

The Medical Women's Federation (MWF) is the largest and most influential body of women doctors in the UK.

The aims are to support women doctors in their personal and professional development, to remove gender barriers in the medical profession at all levels, and to improve the health of women and their families in society.

Annual student sponsorship:

- annual essay competition open to all medical students
- grants for medical student electives
- mature student grants for those with financial hardship.

Their campaign on a number of issues, including flexible working and childcare, have representation on all important medical committees, input into major health policies and documents and, as part of the Medical Women's International Association, look at women's health issues globally.

**Website:** [www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk](http://www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk)



### PATEST

**Main roles: education, career support**

With over 30 years' experience of helping doctors and medical students pass their exams, PasTest provides high quality medical education. It provides a combination of books, courses, online revision, continuing professional development conferences and exhibitions. PasTest offers a complete career solution to medical students and doctors of all disciplines.

**Website:** [www.pastest.co.uk](http://www.pastest.co.uk)



### REFERENCES

- 1 Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board. *Preparing Doctors for the Future: about PMETB*. Available at: [www.pmetb.org.uk/fileadmin/user/Communications/Publications/Preparing\\_Doctors\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_About\\_PMETB.pdf](http://www.pmetb.org.uk/fileadmin/user/Communications/Publications/Preparing_Doctors_for_the_future_About_PMETB.pdf) (accessed 15 January 2009).
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