LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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GMC guidance on confidentiality

Dear Sir,

Tamin [1] raises significant concerns around the recent UK General Medical Council (GMC) guidance on confidentiality, which requires doctors to show or give a copy of any report for employment/insurance purposes to patients before it is sent. Tamin raises a series of ethical arguments in relation to this guidance.

An additional ethical argument is that any process that delays successful workplace rehabilitation is not in an employee’s best interest. Inevitably, this new requirement may introduce a delay of weeks or even months in occupational physicians giving advice on medical fitness for work/workplace accommodations to facilitate early workplace rehabilitation. The longer an employees is out of work without interventions, the more they are at risk of not returning to employment [2]. This in turn can lead to long-term unemployment, with all the negative health and social consequences that stem from this.

Of interest, the Irish Medical Council has recently issued new medical ethics guidelines, which does not contain a requirement for occupational physicians to show medical reports to employees [3].

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References