

LETTERS



THE HARDEST WORD

Cultivating duty of candour requires organisational leadership and culture

Tze Min Wah consultant radiologist (Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust) and honorary clinical associate professor (University of Leeds)

Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology, Leeds Cancer Centre, Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, Leeds LS9 7TF, UK

Oliver and Hibbs and colleagues highlight that duty of candour is our collective responsibility—from junior doctors to organising chiefs.^{1 2}

Organisational leadership and culture play a vital role in cultivating organisational trust,³ empowering culture that facilitates learning (rather than blame),⁴ and nurturing compassion in staff.⁵ If we as healthcare professionals can see the “person in the patient,” the duty of candour would be as natural as saying “sorry” is part of being compassionate.⁶

Chief executives play a crucial role in creating the organisational trust and engaging environment needed for duty of candour culture to flourish. They must ensure that this is embedded within the organisation’s culture, particularly at the frontline.⁷ In Leeds, our chief executive Julian Hartley has created and systematically embedded the organisational values known as “the Leeds way”⁸—“patient centred, collaborative, fair, accountable, and empowered”—using the crowd sourcing tool known as the “way-finder.”⁹ In 2014, he publicly apologised after an inquiry into paediatric cardiac surgery in Leeds—where

care were found to be unacceptable for 16 families—an inspiring way to lead by example.

Competing interests: None declared.

Full response at: www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h3644/rr-0.

- 1 Oliver D. The hardest word: managers and leaders should say sorry too. *BMJ* 2015;351:h3644. (3 July.)
- 2 Hibbs SP, Clarke RT, Littlewood TJ. Cultivating candour about our mistakes. *BMJ* 2015;351:h4121.
- 3 Hope-Hailey V, Robinson V, McCartney C. Where has all the trust gone? CIPD, 2012. www.trustinorganizations.com/Resources/Documents/WhereHasAllTheTrustGone.pdf.
- 4 Macleod H, Alvarez R. Four mindset shifts. 2013. www.longwoods.com/content/23182.
- 5 Macpherson CF. Peer-supported storytelling for grieving pediatric oncology nurses. *J Pediatr Oncol Nurs* 2008;25:148-63.
- 6 Goodrich J, Cornwell J. Seeing the person in the patient. King’s Fund, 2008. www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/seeing-person-patient.
- 7 Robinson P, Tyndale-Discoe J. What makes a top hospital? Organisational culture. 2012. www.chks.co.uk/userfiles/files/CHKS_2012_WMATH_4%20-%20final.pdf.
- 8 Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. Our five year consultation document. 2014.
- 9 Chadwick A. Clevertogogether. Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, 2014. <http://clevertogogether.com/public/category/case-studies/page/2/>.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2015;351:h4123

© BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2015