How can I cope with redeployment?

During the covid-19 pandemic doctors may be asked to work in unfamiliar environments. Abi Rimmer asks experts how they can deal with the change.

“Don’t hesitate to seek advice.

You’re not alone.
Max Denning, core surgical trainee

Work within your competence.
Rob Hendry, medical director at Medical Protection Society

You should apply basic principles of good medical practice: act in the best interests of the patient at all times, work cooperatively with colleagues and work within the limits of your competence. You should make clinical decisions on a case by case basis, taking into account your competence and the availability of other options for care.

“The GMC says that doctors should ‘use their professional judgment to assess risk to deliver safe care informed by any relevant guidance and the values and principles set out in their professional standards.’

Don’t hesitate to seek advice and support from colleagues; good communication will be essential in ensuring your team knows its capabilities and to make sure you have sufficient information and guidance.

“If any doctor is asked to perform a duty that they would not normally undertake, regardless of the circumstances they need to assess whether they have the skills and competency to proceed.

“This will include considering what is in the best interests of the patient. If they don’t feel it’s safe to proceed and that to do so would place the patient at greater risk of harm than not undertaking the duty that has been requested, then they should advise whoever has asked them to do so and explain their concerns.

“It would be wise to record the details of this deliberation in case it becomes necessary to explain the reasoning behind the decision to act or not to act.

“If a doctor believes that they’re being asked to work in a way that’s placing patients at risk of harm they should raise their concerns by following the workplace policy and the GMC’s guidance, Raising and Acting on Concerns about Patient Safety.

“The government has indicated that there would be ‘emergency indemnity’ to enable some healthcare professionals to undertake additional or different duties if required. Our assumption is that this would be state backed as it would be NHS contracted work, specifically to support the government’s plan to manage covid-19.

“If Medical Protection members have any concerns about the duties they’re currently performing to help manage covid-19, they should contact us.”

Cite this as: BMJ 2020;368:m1228