

LETTERS



SUICIDE WHILE UNDER GMC INVESTIGATION

Mixed messages from the GMC on disciplinary processes

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Hawton mentions emotional resilience training and a doctors' support service as possible solutions to suicides and psychiatric morbidity while under investigation by the General Medical Council.¹ But protracted investigations, fear of professional and personal ruin, and the unnecessary complexity of disciplinary processes might themselves play a part in leading doctors to desperation. If this were the case, the more obvious and practical solution would be to improve these processes.

This is reportedly the GMC's aim, but such an aim is difficult to reconcile with its autumn 2014 consultation on enhanced powers to discipline doctors and its wish to appeal against decisions from the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service that it considers too lenient. Hence a clear and specific position

statement from the GMC on how it sees its procedures developing over the coming years would be welcome.

The aims of being fairer and at the same time assuming greater statutory disciplinary powers seem to be contradictory and at least require explanation.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Hawton K. Suicide in doctors while under fitness to practise investigation. *BMJ* 2015;350:h813. (13 February.)

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