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Covid-19: Doctors may quit without proper post-pandemic support, defence body warns

Abi Rimmer

The government must create a national plan to provide doctors with the mental wellbeing support they will need following the covid-19 pandemic, the Medical Protection Society (MPS) has said.

Without support and time to recuperate, many doctors may leave the profession or suffer in silence with psychological injuries, the defence body said.

It called on the government to invest in local initiatives such as counselling services, and fund fast tracked research into the impact of the pandemic on doctors' mental wellbeing.

Pallavi Bradshaw, medicolegal lead in risk prevention at MPS, said that while adrenaline would be carrying many healthcare workers through the pandemic, their accumulated stress and trauma may surface when the crisis recedes.

She said this will be the time that doctors will be most at risk and in need of support, and said the government, the NHS, and private providers should be planning to provide them with the appropriate support.

“A range of support will be needed; for most this will be the biggest health crisis in their careers, with countless patients and colleagues lost,” she said.

“Some will experience grief or moral injury, some may have unresolved anger over matters such as personal protective equipment supply, or distress and fear of reprisal at being unable to treat patients with non-covid-19 conditions. Others may suffer with post traumatic stress, and many are at risk of burnout against a backdrop of an already burnt out workforce.”

Bradshaw added, “The last thing we want is huge swathes of doctors leaving the profession after covid-19. This must be avoided—it is time to care for doctors just as they have cared for us.”