



Medical Practice, Record Keeping & Patient Engagement

Record Keeping is Key

Last week Claims Specialists, Nadia Shiba of Itoo Special Risks (Pty) Ltd's, attended the annual medical Legal conference. There were various speakers from State as well as the private sector to discuss topics relevant to the medical profession and more specifically to medical negligence claims.

One of the most interesting speakers who started of the conference was Adv Makhosi from the Department of Health who stressed on the point that a culture of accountability and safety needs to be created in the medical space. He further stressed the importance of record keeping.

In most cases it has been found that the records of medical professions and hospitals are incorrect, incomplete or illegible, if they do exist. This situation may be problematic for a practitioner who may be cited as a party in litigation proceedings or may have a complaint lodged against them at the relevant statutory/ regulatory body. We must always bear in mind that the importance of medical records do provide a window as to the clinical judgement exercised by the practitioner at the time. To add to this , how can one defend themselves without proper ammunition, which holds true to most situations in life.

What Practitioners across the board need to keep in mind in respect of record keeping is the following:

- Records need to be accurate
- Records need to be reliable
- Records must be complete
- Records must be properly monitored
- Adverse events must be documented and properly recorded.

In addition to the above what is on the rise is the operation of syndicates in public hospitals and possibly also the private sector who are vying to get their hands on medical records and as you know we are country that's heading toward regulating the flow and protection of personal information and holding people/ institutions accountable for not ensuring that such information is protected. Practitioners also need to be mindful of this.

Patient Engagement

"If I fulfill this Oath, and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy my life and my art, being honoured with fame among all men, and at all times. If I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot."

Hippocrates ever conscious of his responsibility and personal example to future generations of physicians was right to set such high ethical standards in his Oath which is a promise made by Physicians to do everything possible to help their patients and importantly to have high morals standards in their work.

Over the past few months, there have been a spike in complaints lodged against Practitioners with the HPCSA relating to the manner in which the Practitioner has spoken to or engaged with the patient.

Further to our communication sent earlier in the month regarding the importance of record keeping, Nadia Shiba of Itoo Special Risks (Pty) Ltd who attended the Annual Medical Legal Conference shares Prof Shadrack Mazaza of the African Consciousness Institute's emphasis made on the **3 Stage Assessment** of which **Family Medicine** consists of.

Clinical which is defined as an evaluation of a patient's physical condition and prognosis based on information gathered from physical and laboratory examinations and the patient's medical history - relating to the disease.

- Presenting Complaint
- Diagnosis

Personal relates to how the patient experiences the illness

- Fears
- Feelings
- Concerns
- Expectations
- Ideas
- Beliefs
- Impact on Functioning

Contextual relates to the assessment of the patient's environment, how it affects the patient, as well as how the disease affects the patient's surroundings

- Financial problems - sole breadwinner
- Stress
- Loss
- Conflict
- Isolation
- Change
- Adjustment

Engagement requires that the Practitioner is present with their patient, having an understanding of human beings and the human operating system. The art of communication and relationship is something that needs to be mastered by Practitioners and what this entails is:

- Effective Communication
- Presence
- Engaged Interactions
- Connection
- Value and Caring

By being mindful of the Engagement issue, the possibility of having to appear before the HPCSA due to a complaint about how a patient was treated could be avoided!