

Statement

High Court ruling on GMC v Bawa-Garba

26th January 2018

It would be inappropriate for the Academy to comment on the specifics of the tragic case of the death of a child that led to yesterday's High Court ruling where Dr Bawa-Garba was erased from the medical register. Nothing positive can be said to have come from this – which makes it particularly sad.

That said, the Academy does believe the case brings into sharp focus a number of deeply concerning issues which must be addressed with some urgency. These are:

- Doctors in training must be given adequate high-quality clinical supervision, even in the most stressful and pressured environments. They must be confident that they are able to make decisions with sufficient oversight from consultants in a way that protects them and their patients while allowing them to work and develop.
- All staff must be encouraged and be able to reflect honestly, openly and safely, and without the fear of recrimination as part of the vital learning process. The threat of this being used in a potentially negative way may potentially promote a lack of candour as well as loss of learning opportunities.
- Understanding that safe and effective care is delivered through systems – and each part of these systems must function. This, by definition includes the need to ensure safe staffing levels, functioning IT, supporting those returning to work and must be scrutinised as a whole and improved in the light of near misses, safety incidents or patients being harmed.

Patient safety is paramount and learning from previous experience in an environment of openness fosters this. The Academy recognises that medical Royal Colleges and faculties have a role to play in helping to ensure that all doctors in training are fully supported by both clinical and educational supervisors, that there are mechanisms for safe reflective learning and standards are set that include all parts of the system.

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