

Statement

11th June 2018

Academy welcomes the publication of Sir Norman Williams' review into issues relating to gross negligence manslaughter.

It has become clear that a review of the issues around this law as it is applied to healthcare practice was required and it is helpful that Sir Norman Williams has carried out the task so swiftly.

The Academy and its constituent colleges and faculties will consider the report and all its recommendations in detail in due course, but we are pleased to see those on the quality and standardisation of investigations; on better understanding of the application of the law; on the use of medical experts and on recognition of the need for improved support for all involved in such cases.

The Academy has been charged with taking forward action in two areas and will work to address the issues raised.

Ensuring the quality and consistency of medical experts in medico-legal practice has been a concern of the medical royal colleges for some time. While colleges do not have a regulatory responsibility, a key role is to ensure that doctors of all grades are appropriately trained and have the relevant professional development. They are therefore well placed to assist in providing essential professional training and support for doctors taking these roles. As with other areas of medical practice, colleges can define standards expected of professionals and set principles of good practice.

The Academy will therefore work with its constituent members and other key stakeholders including the legal profession and healthcare regulators to create a framework of good practice for doctors providing medico-legal opinions. It is obviously too early to say what form this could take but the Academy will coordinate and support work by colleges and faculties to define standards and training needs for experts and expert witnesses.

Second, in terms of the recommendation on producing guidance on reflection and reflective practice this work is already well underway. The Academy is working with the General Medical Council (GMC) the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans (COPMED) and the Medical Schools Council on reflective practice guidance. We will also, with COPMED, be producing a practical toolkit for doctors with examples of how to produce good and productive reflections which will help them to become better practitioners.

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