
Accepting fees for referral of patients to Solicitors (2002)

FAQ: Referring patients with personal injury claims

Question: I have been approached about a scheme which involves identifying patients who may have a personal injury claim, and referring them to a particular company to pursue that claim. There are financial incentives according to the number of patients I refer. Are schemes like this acceptable?

Good Medical Practice makes it clear that trust between patient and doctor is essential to a successful professional relationship. Trust may be damaged by situations in which a doctor's financial interest affects, or is seen to affect, their professional judgement. And it would be an abuse of that trust to put pressure on patients to use a specific product or service which will bring a financial advantage to the doctor.

Schemes that involve payment according to the number of customers referred are especially prone to giving the appearance of a conflict of interest on the doctor's part. Doctors generally have no expertise in legal services on which to base their recommendation of a particular firm, and their chief interest in such schemes is a financial one. For these reasons, such schemes are not appropriate.