Speaking Up

GMC Student Professionalism Competition 2019
Take-Home Messages

• To understand that the whole team is responsible for patient safety, including medical students.

• To understand the importance of raising concerns about patient safety promptly.

• To understand that concerns can be raised via following the policy of the medical school, or by asking an experienced healthcare professional for advice.
THE SCENARIO
You are a 4th year medical student
You’re on a ward round with a junior doctor

You observe the junior doctor take a history from the patient
I apologise for the delay Mr Smith, we’re very pushed for time today. You’re the last one on the round this morning!
No worries doc! It does seem awfully busy...
Yes, I’m afraid it’s non-stop today! Still, what has brought you in today?
Well... I’ve been feeling under the weather lately and it hasn’t really been settling...
Dr Jones proceeds to take a history from Mr Smith, asking about the presenting complaint, its history, any relevant past medical history, etc...
...and well, that’s pretty much all I can tell you.
Thank you Mr Smith, looks like you need a course of IV antibiotics to help you, I’ll--.
--Looks like I’m needed elsewhere urgently! I’ll sort those antibiotics out for you Mr Smith!
Thank you very much doc!
Love, do you have any idea what antibiotics I need? I know you’re only a student.
According to the latest guidelines, you will need flucloxacillin, Mr Smith.
That don’t seem right love, sounds like that peni-slimin’ stuff...
Do you mean penicillin Mr Smith?
Yeah that’s the one, love. Can’t have that, stuff makes me go all itchy and puffy!
Oh, so it sounds like you’re allergic to penicillin? I don’t think that came up when you spoke to Dr Jones.
Nah love, doc never asked me!
Well thank you for letting me know Mr Smith, I’ll be sure to pass it on to Dr Jones. I’ll leave you to rest.
Cheers love, all the best with the studying!
You leave to go find Dr Jones on the wards...
You find Dr Jones rushing around the ward...

Sorry Dr Jones, I need to inform you of something important.
Sorry! I’m in the middle of something right now. I’ll answer your question later, read about it in the meantime!
Dr Jones, I’m really sorry, it’s not a question. I just spoke to Mr Smith after you left. He told me he’s allergic to penicillin.
Right right, allergies.
Got it. Thanks.
I’m not sure you got it...
You leave to attend a teaching session at the undergraduate learning centre. After you finish, you wonder what became of Mr Smith and decide to go check on him...
That’s strange, Mr Smith doesn’t have a red allergy band yet...
The drug chart also still has flucloxacillin on it. Did Dr Jones even listen to me?
What do you do?

Click on one of the options below

Chase up Dr Jones.

You already know he is very busy and may not listen properly. You also run the risk of annoying him, possibly meaning he’ll be reluctant to teach you in future.

Do nothing.

You’ve already spoken with Dr Jones. It is very likely that he simply hasn’t gotten around to updating the drug chart and may have already ensured Mr Smith does not receive flucloxacillin.
Excuse me Dr Jones, I’m really sorry to bother you again. It’s about Mr Smith...

You go out of your way to find Dr Jones again...
AH! Thank you so much, I completely forgot to sort that out. Penicillin allergy right?
Yes! I just went to check up on Mr Smith and flucloxacillin was still on the drug chart.
I thought it would be best to check again with you, but was a bit worried considering how busy you’ve been all morning...
No no, you absolutely did the right thing! I am terribly sorry for earlier, it’s been a wild morning.
If it wasn’t for you, this morning would have gotten a whole lot wilder dealing with Mr Smith’s anaphylaxis!
Very well done.

Thanks to your actions, Dr Jones did not give Mr Smith flucloxacillin, thus you prevented Mr Smith experiencing an anaphylactic episode – one which could potentially come with fatal complications given that Mr Smith was already unwell to begin with.

Patient safety comes above all else and even as a medical student, you are an integral part of the patient care team.
Hypotension...tachycardia
...this isn’t right...
I really hope this isn’t what I think it is…
He’s in anaphylactic shock! Allergies, shoot I forgot!!!
I could have stopped this, why didn’t I just say something...
Despite the risk of coming across as annoying to Dr Jones, you should always take the course of action that ensures patient safety. Even though you are a medical student, you observed that Dr Jones was under a tremendous amount of pressure and so acting diligently to politely check with Dr Jones about Mr Smith would not be inappropriate.

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Mr Smith successfully makes a full recovery and all is well. He is discharged with the appropriate antibiotics, having taken his allergies into account.
I’m glad that Mr Smith is alright now, but that was a close call...
I know that Dr Jones has a bit of a reputation for these close calls, and he hardly listens...
I’m not sure how I feel about this, maybe I should flag it up?
What do you do?

*Click on one of the options below*

**Flag up your concerns.**

Flagging up your concerns is likely to cause problems for Dr Jones and harm your working relationship with him. This comes with the added hassle of having to take the time out of your learning to follow the procedure to flag up.

**Do nothing.**

Dr Jones is far more experienced than you are, and everyone makes mistakes from time to time. Perhaps this time, Dr Jones will reflect on this near-miss and be sure to not repeat the same mistake again.
You find your medical student colleagues nearby...

Hi guys, I’ve got a bit of a situation and I could use your advice.
Hey, of course we’ll help!
Tell us what the situation is.
So, there’s a junior doctor that I’m a bit concerned about...
You proceed to tell your colleagues about the situation, but you ensure not to break confidentiality or name anyone...
...and that's pretty much it. I'm a bit stuck as to how I should flag it up.
Oh! I think I remember us getting a lecture on this.
Yes! The one where they told us about the GMC’s “Achieving Good Medical Practice”.
I remember one of the points was to follow the medical school’s policy on raising concerns.
That’s right, I definitely remember that. You could ask our student services team about the policy?
Thank you so much guys, you’ve really helped! I’ll be sure to do that tomorrow.
Very well done.

You followed your medical school’s policy on raising concerns, and by doing so you have acted according to the GMC’s “Achieving Good Medical Practice”.

Your diligence and actions have resulted in Dr Jones receiving much-needed support from his consultants to ensure that he continues to develop professionally and not jeopardise patient safety.
Some time later after everything has happened...

I can’t help but feel as though I should’ve done something about Dr Jones...
What if it happened again? What if someone died this time? The guilt is weighing on me...
You can do better.

By not flagging up your concerns, you do not know for certain if Dr Jones ever changed his practice or if future patients’ safety is still at risk. The next time, it may not be a near-miss and instead cost a patient’s life.

Even as medical students, you have a responsibility to ensure that members of the health care team, including yourself, do not act in a way that will jeopardise patient safety. If there are concerns, these should always be raised in a proper manner according to medical school policies, as mentioned in the GMC’s “Achieving Good Medical Practice”.
THE END
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Thank you for watching.
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