

Is it really abuse?

ACCORDING to a new national study patients and their relatives are frequently abusing doctors (The Saturday Age, 23/9). Recently I wrote to a GP complaining about a medication error in an aged care facility. The GP, who clearly found my letter abusive, threatened to sue me for defamation.

How many doctors in the national study confused a legitimate complaint with abuse? Are patients and relatives better educated and more willing nowadays to criticise doctors and question treatment decisions? Many doctors are dismissive of patients giving them information they have researched from various sources such as the Internet or even peer reviewed journals. The chance of confusing criticism with abuse is possibly higher among doctors than other professions. They need to take criticism in the spirit in which it is given – to achieve the best health outcomes.

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