

The Complexities of Reporting Colleague Misconduct



Reading time:
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The party doc

Dr L is a medical registrar in an accredited training position. Her colleague Dr T is a fellow trainee on the program, who has a reputation for being a 'party boy'. He often arrives for work in the morning with unironed shirts and blood-shot eyes. Despite Dr T's appearance, he is a keen intellect, well liked in the hospital and achieves good results in assessments, which are openly shared with Dr L.

One morning Dr T comes in to work more ruffled and tired than usual and jokes with colleagues about a big weekend. During ward rounds, Dr L is frustrated that Dr T makes multiple stops to the toilet and staff kitchen to make coffee. Dr T does not seem interested in the patients, leaving Dr L to do most of the work that day.

The following week, Dr T behaves in a similar manner, elevating Dr L's level of frustration. Dr L considers whether Dr T has gone too far and compromised his work and his patients' safety. Dr L is not inclined to report Dr T to either AHPRA or the hospital as his actions don't seem significant enough - after all, a patient hasn't been hurt yet...

After contacting MIPS

Dr L was advised to discuss concerns with Dr T, and to suggest that if this conduct does not change she will need to raise concerns with the hospital. It may be considered that this requires mandatory reporting.

If she believed it to be appropriate, Dr L was advised to check the health and wellbeing of Dr T and give him the contact number for the Dr's Health support line.

Key messages

- If the conduct continues, escalate it to the Director of Medical Services, Chief Medical Officer or similar.
- The Medical Board Code of Conduct states that "the welfare of patients may be put at risk if a doctor is performing poorly".
- The National Law requires practitioners, employers and education providers to report 'notifiable conduct', as defined in section 140 of the National Law, to AHPRA to prevent the public being placed at risk of harm.
- Always consult your employer and MIPS before making a mandatory report about a colleague.

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