

# The poor communicator

Reading time:

Jayson Nagpiing

Date created: 14/03/2024

A patient arrives in the ED late at night with a sore and swollen groin, insisting that the pain is getting worse. The patient is seen by Dr P, who quickly suspects that the patient has a femoral hernia.

Dr P advises the patient to remove their pants and lay down on the examination table. Without warning or explanation, the doctor palpates the patient's groin. The patient fends off the doctor's abrupt physical contact and asks, "What do you think you are doing?". The patient complains and reports the incident to the hospital, stating that inappropriate physical contact had occurred. The hospital advises Dr P that a complaint has been made against him.

## After contacting MIPS

MIPS assisted Dr P in drafting a letter of apology to the patient and explanation to the hospital. It is crucial to explain all examinations and processes required and obtain adequate consent to care before initiating any physical contact with patients. This is especially critical during sensitive examinations or procedures that involve physical contact with intimate areas.

## Key messages

The Medical Board Code of Conduct states that when working with patients, effective communication includes informing patients of the nature of, and need for, all aspects of their clinical management including examinations, investigations and giving them adequate opportunity to question or refuse intervention and treatment.

Always ensure you obtain adequate consent to therapeutic treatment or examinations from your patients before any intervention takes place.

Promptly notify MIPS of any adverse or unexpected outcome, complaint, claim or investigation related to your practice. Early action may mitigate outcomes such as stopping the complaint going to Ahpra, as it did in this case.

---