

Duty of Candour

Guidance for Registrants

Doc ref #96

Version 1.0

July 2022

Review date: July 2024



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Introduction

This short guidance provides guidance on the professional duty of candour. It explains our expectations of Academy for Healthcare Science ('the Academy') registrants.

This guidance is focused on our standards. Your employer may also have relevant policies or guidance that apply to you.

This guidance draws on guidance published by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Language

Throughout this document:

- 'we' and 'our' refers to the Academy for Healthcare Science ('the Academy');
- 'registrant' refers to a professional or practitioner on our Accredited Register; and
- 'you' or 'your' refers to a registrant.

Section 1: Our standards and the duty of candour

The professional 'duty of candour' refers to the expectation that health professionals, including our registrants, should be open and honest with their patients and service users when something goes wrong with their treatment or care.

Good Scientific Practice (1.1.1), says you must:

'...put patients first and do the following:

- Fulfil your duty of candour if something goes wrong in a patient's care.'

We also say that registrants must act in the interests of patient safety at all times including co-operating 'promptly, fully and honestly in complaints and investigation processes' (1.4.5).

Section 2: Fulfilling your duty of candour

The purpose of the duty of candour is to make sure that health professionals are open and honest with their patients and service users when mistakes occur, so that appropriate action can be taken and professionals and healthcare providers can learn and improve their services.

Fulfilling your duty of candour in our standards means taking steps when something has gone wrong with the care, treatment or other services you provide to:

- inform patients and service users or, where appropriate, their carers, that something has gone wrong;
- apologise;
- put matters right if possible; and
- make sure that patients and service users, or, where appropriate, their carers, receive a full and prompt explanation of what has happened and any likely effects.

If you hold a patient-facing and/or managerial role, you might be involved in taking some or all of the steps above yourself. However, as care and treatment is often delivered in multi-disciplinary teams, and clinical errors can involve multiple issues, it might be that other professionals are involved in directly taking the steps outlined above rather than you.

However, you should still make sure that you have adhered to the principles above by being open and honest at all times. This, includes, for example, following any policies or guidance your employer has around incident reporting and appropriately and promptly reporting any patient safety concerns you may have.

An apology is not considered an admission of liability or wrongdoing. However, it is a crucial step in acknowledging that something has gone wrong and maintaining a relationship with the patient and their carers. You should always apply candour in a meaningful way, with empathy and conscience; understanding how to engage is as important as when to engage.

It is important that where incidents occur, professionals and service providers learn from what has gone wrong so that, where possible, steps can be taken to prevent or mitigate the risk of the same problem occurring again. Good Scientific Practice says that registrants must actively engage and participate in quality assurance processes including contributing to 'enacting, reviewing and updating service delivery processes and procedures to uphold patient, service user and public safety, in line with your scope of practice, competence and job role and informed by current best practice' (2.3.4). Learning from incidents where something has gone wrong will also be a useful learning activity for a registrant's Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Section 3: More information

You can contact us if you have any questions about this guidance or our standards. However, we cannot offer legal advice.

Our contact details are:

The Academy for Healthcare Science
6 The Terrace
Rugby Road
Lutterworth
Leicestershire
LE17 4BW

Phone: +44 (0)1455 244640

Email: admin@ahcs.ac.uk

You can download copies of our standards documents and other publications from our website at www.ahcs.ac.uk

Glossary

Care, treatment or other services

A general term to describe the different work that the healthcare science workforce carry out.

Carer

Anyone who looks after, or who provides support to, a family member, partner or friend.

Duty of candour

Being open and honest when something goes wrong with the care, treatment or other services that you provide.

Patient

Those who receive care or a service by the healthcare science workforce. This term includes service users and clients.