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Notes of Meeting – 29 Oct 04

Present :

Dr Dieter Berens – Specialist Anaesthetist BBH
Mr Peter Leck – DM BHSD
Dr Darren Keating – DMS BHSD

Context :

Ms Toni Hoffman NUM ICU/CCU has made a number of allegations against Dr Jayant Patel, Director of Surgery BBH, including some allegations about his clinical competence. Dr Berens was asked to provide any comment in relation to these allegations because Ms Hoffman had named him as one doctor who shared similar concerns.

Response :

Dr Berens noted that he could only talk about areas that crossed over with Dr Patel, being primarily care of ICU patients. He believed that Dr Patel's critical care knowledge was not up-to-date in relation to choice of some drugs and fluids plus application of some physiology principles to care of critically ill patients. He remembered 2 cases related to his concerns. He acknowledged that he was aware of a difficult working relationship between Dr Patel and some ICU nurses.

As an anaesthetist, Dr Berens noted that Dr Patel's manual skills were very good and that patients being admitted to BBH (and ICU) were older and sicker than several years ago, when he was previously employed at BBH. He questioned Dr Patel's judgement to undertake some procedures (e.g. vascular, Whipples), with regard to his currency in doing such procedures. In one case of placement of a gastrostomy tube, he had concerns about the control of the trochar.

He believed that Dr Patel's attitude to other professionals made him hard to work with on occasions. He felt that Dr Patel made categorical statements, didn't appear flexible and wouldn't discuss alternative clinical options. Dr Berens believed that Dr Patel appeared reluctant to admit to other doctors his own mistake or error in care of patients. He didn't appear to be completely accountable and honest about his surgical actions.

Dr Berens noted that Dr Patel could be short with his resident staff (while acknowledging that most senior doctors had been short with residents at different times) and had a reasonable working relationship with nursing staff in theatre. He believed he could continue to work with Dr Patel in the future.

Dr Darren Keating
DMS

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