



OPEN COMMUNICATION WHEN  
THINGS GO WRONG IN  
HEALTHCARE

***REPRESENTING THE PATIENT  
NOT THE STATISTIC***

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According to research two thirds of all complaints have their origin in communication behaviours.



# Over the next 25 minutes

- ❑ Outline the complaints statistics in AMNCH and IMO
- ❑ International research that links medico-legal proceedings with poor communication
- ❑ The benefits and drawbacks of using statistics
- ❑ The human face of complaints



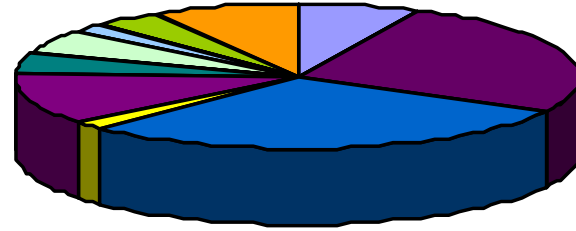
# **AMNCH COMPLAINTS 2008**

**Average of about 617 assignments  
of which over 90% are  
complaints**

## **Top 3 Issues:**

- (1) Communication Failures**
- (2) Delay Issues**
- (3) Service Delivery**

# IMO Fitness to Practice Statistics 2008



## Top 3 Issues:

- (1) Professional Standards
- (2) Treatment
- (3) Failure to communicate / Rudeness

# Bunting's Research

## Precipitating factors

- Adverse outcome
- Failure to provide adequate care
- Mistakes or incorrect care
- System errors

## Predisposing factors

- Rudeness
- Delay (espec if unacknowledged)
- Inattentiveness
- Miscommunication
- Apathetic doctor
- No communication



# Facts Can Mask The Human Face

- ❑ **Dr Berwick**
- ❑ **While the statistics are very relevant**
- ❑ **Very often they mask the communication elements and can unwittingly minimise and dehumanise the problem**



# You don't want to transform human disaster into facts and figures





# What does the Complainant Want

- Apology
- Taken Seriously – Formal/Informal
- Assurance it won't happen again
- Change in practice

**Ref: International Journal for Quality in Healthcare 2008 Volume 20, Number 6.**

# Case Study 1

## □ Escalating Complaint

- Elderly Gentleman – DNR
- Pastoral Care
- Miscommunication
- Documentation



# Case Study 2

## ❑ Catastrophic

❑ 56 year old – post op

❑ Documentation in Nursing Notes

❑ RIP



# Case Study 3

## □ Potentially Catastrophic

- Informed patient fully
- Root cause analysis
- Patient copy of report
- Immediate implementation of recommendations





# In Summary

- ❑ **Communication is a significant aspect of our complaints statistics**
- ❑ **Saw the link between communication and litigation. The importance of local resolution.**
- ❑ **Outlined the benefits of statistics but how they can mask the human face.**
- ❑ **The Human face of complaints and the role communication played in resolving them.**



**Complaint management is everyone's responsibility.**

**Handling complaints effectively from the start benefits everyone involved, and it helps to keep small complaints from becoming big ones.**



THANK YOU