

Sources of support for doctors

The Royal College of Anaesthetists and the Difficult Airway Society have initiated a national audit project (NAP4) starting September 2008 to run for one year looking at serious complications of airway management (death, hypoxic brain injury, emergency tracheostomy / cricothyroidotomy or unexpected ITU admission).

During planning meetings it became clear that while we are looking at patient outcomes, it is likely that the clinicians involved in the care of these patients may need personal support at a difficult time. The advice below relates primarily to the doctors involved in these cases.

We have identified several sources of support that can be accessed confidentially to help clinicians who find themselves in this situation:

- 1) Local [occupational health departments](#) would be a first source of help and many have access to local counselling / support services including those with experience of post traumatic stress disorders.
- 2) [Medical defence organisations](#) (MPS <http://www.medicalprotection.org/uk> and MDU <http://www.the-mdu.com/>) should of course be contacted, as well as offering legal support which may be relevant they can often give appropriate advice based on their experience of dealing with difficult cases.
- 3) The [Doctors for Doctors](#) service is described by the BMA as ‘an enhancement of BMA Counselling and offers doctors in distress or difficulty the option of speaking in confidence to another doctor. They describe their ‘team of doctor-advisors working with you to gain insight into your problems, supporting and helping you to move on by adopting a holistic approach to your situation’. You can access the service via BMA Counselling on 08459 200 169 or visit www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubhealthandwellbeing for more information.
- 4) For Anaesthetists, the AAGBI (<http://www.aagbi.org>) has a [welfare committee](#) which may be able to offer help and advice to doctors with difficulties. They can be contacted during office hours on 0207 631 1650 or via secretariat@aagbi.org and should be able to put the doctor in contact with an appropriate advisor. The AGGBI also contributes doctor advisors to the BMA “Doctors for Doctors” service mentioned above.

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