

## News release

Institute of General Practice Management

Embargoed to 1.30pm BST Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2021

### **Majority of GP receptionists face unprecedented levels of abuse at work, new research shows**

New [campaign video](#) calls for end to abuse from patients

“If I die, it will be your fault,” is just one of the abusive comments heard by GP reception staff, as a new survey\* launched today shows 75% report experiencing daily abuse from patients.

With the majority (78%) facing threatening behaviour, racist or sexist abuse from patients, and 83% reporting having called the police for help, today the Institute of General Practice Management (IGPM) launch their campaign to end all abuse towards general practice staff.

The IGPM members have responded to the increase in physical, verbal, and written abuse towards practice staff over the Covid-19 pandemic, with a video of real-life examples of patient interactions from practices across the UK. These include:

- GP staff whose tyres were slashed by a patient who had not been able to get an appointment that day;
- A receptionist with Chinese heritage, who received racist abuse and was spat on in relation to the Covid-19 virus;
- Daily verbal threats including the common phrase: “If I die, it will be your fault”.

Robyn Clark, a practice manager in South Gloucestershire and one of the founders of the IGPM commented: *“As demand for GP services has increased dramatically over the last year, sadly so has the amount of abuse practice staff have faced.*

*“The aim of our campaign is to highlight the good work practices are doing, and make a plea to the public to be patient with our staff, instead of attacking them. GP staff have worked throughout the pandemic and have done their absolute best to support patients. We’re calling for the abuse to end now.”*

The survey of 571 GP practice managers showed that 83% have had to remove a patient from the surgery due to multiple incidents towards their team. Other recent research from an [NHS Staff Survey](#) showed that 14.9% of respondents had been subjected to physical violence while in work. Much abuse goes unreported and national annual data on physical assaults against NHS staff are no longer published. The ‘If I die it will be your fault’ campaign aims to raise awareness of the zero-tolerance approach to abuse and encourage all practice staff to feel confident about reporting incidents.

Nicola Davies, a practice manager and founding member of the IGPM said: *“We hope that by raising the personal effect of abuse on staff, we can encourage patients to be tolerant and understanding. Our staff are doing their job. It is never a personal vendetta to stop a patient from accessing healthcare.”*

Kay Keane, a practice manager from Stockport and Director of the IGPM said: *“A man attended our practice with six knives because he didn’t get the treatment he wanted. He smashed up the waiting room and threatened staff members. It was a scene we never want repeated in GP practice. It was terrifying and unnecessary. But we also know this is extreme. Bad language and threats are an everyday occurrence, and it is unacceptable.”*

Jo Wadey, a practice manager in Worthing and founding member of the IGPM commented: *"Receptionists are leaving their roles because of the abuse they receive, which means we are continually trying to recruit and train, which puts a huge strain on practices."*

The 'If I die it will be your fault' campaign video [can be found here](#), with practices up and down the country joining forces to share the message that abuse towards practice staff must stop.

Campaign video:  
<https://youtu.be/hAM3fSDq9kA>

Full version  
<https://youtu.be/3ru4QhVZ2a8>

## **ENDS**

For more information on the 'If I die it will be your fault' campaign contact...

Kay Keane FRSA  
Director of the [Institute of General Practice Management](#)  
Practice Business Manager at the Alvanley Family Practice in Stockport  
Email: [kay.keane@nhs.net](mailto:kay.keane@nhs.net) or [info@igpm.org.uk](mailto:info@igpm.org.uk)

Tel: 07765 407332

\*A survey on [Practice Index](#) taken this week, of a sample size of 571 GP practice managers (confidence level of 95%) found that:

- 75% of GP staff experience abuse from patients on a daily basis, and 13% at least once a week.
- 78% report that the abuse experienced is a combination of threatening behaviour, racist abuse, and sexist abuse.
- 63% said they have had to call the police because of abusive behaviour towards staff.
- 83% have removed a patient because of multiple incidents of abuse towards their team.

### **Key quotes from the campaign video:**

"If I die, it will be your fault"

"A patient turned up at the surgery and threatened staff with a hammer because he couldn't get an appointment that suited him."

"A Chinese staff member was spat at by a patient who told her to take her virus back home with her."

"I don't want to see the Indian doctor. I want to see the British one."

"Three of our team had their tyres slashed by a patient after we couldn't give him an appointment. He had phoned at 5pm and was offered an appointment for the following day as we were fully booked."