

Verbal Abuse of Medical Staff it's not negotiable?

Only this week, I have been shocked and appalled to witness overt racial abuse directed at an Indian colleague in my workplace. Admittedly the patient was pissed (and a moron) but that as ever is no excuse. Fortunately the police were present and said individual was hauled off to custody to answer for his behaviour.

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The doctor involved just wrote his notes and then carried on with seeing the next patient. He didn't seem to have been affected by the incident at all; he wasn't angry, upset or disturbed. Now, as politically incorrect as this point may be, it's one I will make anyway. Why should that doctor have been any more vexed by events than I was when called a "fat cow" by a similar patient (also pissed, also a moron) only an hour before? The same police officers witnessed this exchange, but no gallant gestures involving handcuffs were forthcoming in my honour. The difference being that I am white. My skin colour precludes me from bringing any criminal charge and I have to be satisfied with the sound of arse hitting pavement, courtesy of the hospital security staff.

I as many others have no tolerance for racially motivated

abuse or prejudice. I am proud to work shoulder to shoulder with doctors, nurses, ambulance staff and other professionals, who between them represent a world wide spread of accents and skin colours. As any member of a solid team, I will react in a defensive and protective manner to any criticism levelled at them. If I want to moan about them, that's fine, but if anyone else try's it – God help them! In my heart, I hope that their sentiments towards me are similar. Ultimately the job in hand gets done and a reasonable degree of spiritual wellbeing is maintained. None of this though has any basis in the realms of race or colour of skin. Surely if we can ever hope to achieve a society or culture where skin colour is as unimportant as eye colour or shoe size, this attitude must be nurtured and encouraged to prosper and spread.

My argument here is that by playing the racial abuse card when some piss-head hurls a random insult from their limited vocabulary, it simply serves to draw attention to the issue of race. Where the emphasis should be placed is on the fact that a doctor (male, female, black, white or bright green), has been subjected to inappropriate verbal aggression and has been shown a degree of disrespect that should result in the offender being shown the door or a yellow card at the very least. The nature of the insult should not be assessed against a league table of what is or may be just about

acceptable and what will be tolerated. I am not suggesting even for a second that comments relating to racial origin, religion or political views should be tolerated. Simply that equal weight should be attached to the comments based on questionable parentage, clinical ability, baldness, gingeriness, eyesight or body mass index of ANY member of staff. I say "take no prisoners: show some respect or you're out!"

Healthcare staff interact with patients from all walks of life and are privy to the best and worst of their natures. Every patient has equal rights and every effort is made to view them as individuals, regardless of background, religious views or degree of need. I eagerly await the day when staff too are viewed and treated in a similar light. When verbal abuse is seen as an unacceptable behaviour, whoever it is directed at and

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regardless of what physical trait the offender has latched onto on any given occasion.

Agree or disagree? We're waiting to hear your comments – features@wagglemag.com