

**Minutes of the Derby Medical Society, Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025**  
**Derby Medical School Lecture Theatre**

**Multiple Jeopardy**

*Dr Ifat Ataullah, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist*

**Apologies:** None Received

Dr Sally Archer, President, welcomed everyone to this, the seventh meeting of the 2024-2025 season.

Minutes of previous two meetings given by Dr McIntyre

Dr Archer introduced Dr Ataullah who she has known from their time together as students at St Mary's Medical School. Dr Ataullah was subject of a disciplinary investigation, wrongly. Her experience of unfair treatment and isolation led to her resigning. The Trust later apologised and retracted the allegations. Her experience has led to her involvement to help doctors understand the processes that should be in place and followed when allegations are made. She has published in this area and been involved in making films that help educate and support doctors when they are in this position.

Dr Ataullah explained how important it is to 'get it right' when allegations are made against doctors both for the individuals and for the NHS. In a BMJ Open article, Bourne reported results from a survey of 7926 BMA members and their experiences when complaint investigations are initiated. It highlighted significant risks of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and defensive practice amongst doctors. Many felt victimised (20%) and bullied (39%).

The NHS has a framework to adhere to: Maintaining High Professional Standards in the Modern NHS (MHPS). All Trusts must have procedures to follow when concerns are raised and they are expected to follow the MHPS Guidance. The specific areas for raising concerns are: conduct; capability; health. While some Trusts do get it right there are many times due process is not followed. Dr Attaulah highlighted the MPS report in 2018. In a BMJ article Dr Bradshaw from MPS outlined some of the key elements that underline a sound process: consistency; timeliness; proportionality; fairness; accountability.

Dr Ataullah shared the story of a Consultant Anaesthetist who was subjected to investigations. She has been making a film about this case called Multiple Jeopardy. She shared a short you tube clip as an introduction (<https://youtu.be/snt5VNW6KW0>). She then expanded on how the process implemented by the Trust created an environment in which Dr Suresh felt increasingly trapped and isolated and with nowhere to turn to get help and guidance. This downward spiral resulted in him taking his own life. This particular case does much to illustrate how devastating the process can be. Dr Ataullah has been in contact with his wife and explained how she has been working hard to not only come to terms with her personal loss but also striving to find ways to reduce the risks for doctors when caught up in the process in the future.

Dr Ataullah expanded on the GMC process that doctors can find themselves in when complaints and allegations are made. She highlighted how little the profession knows about

it and the need for doctors have greater appreciation of what is involved. The high suicide rate amongst those under investigation reflects on the huge impact it has.

She signposted some of the important places to find support. Justice for Doctors (JFD) 'is a not-for-profit organisation aiming to provide support, and guidance to doctors and other healthcare professionals who have experienced or are experiencing discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and feel targeted because of whistleblowing.' She also highlighted how important it is to be able to safely speak up on safety. Dr Sasha Brown has demonstrated this with 'Speaking up on Safety: understanding the employers handbook'. Some of the principles emerging from the case of Dr Suresh can be seen as a template for a charter or rights. The Voice of Doctors is an organisation working for 'better safeguarding and protection of doctors in their interactions with numerous, external organisations including GMC and employers, which leads to multiple jeopardy'. It aims to 'allow doctors to speak so that these unjust practices change'.

Dr Ataullah concluded on the many challenges that doctors can face and the need to get it right. The recent case of Dr Suresh has raised whether the GMC has a duty of care to doctors and this being taken to the High Court

23 members and guests signed the register.