



A CHARTER OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MEDICAL ACCIDENTS

- *The practice of medicine and undergoing medical treatment carry with them risks. These risks should be explained by health professionals in a way the patient can understand.*
- *Patients' physical and mental health must remain the paramount concern of any treating health professional, whether or not there is a dispute over treatment or a medical error is alleged to have been made.*
- *There will be occasions when an adverse outcome is unavoidable. Avoidable injury may also be caused by human error on the part of health professionals, or others assisting health professionals in the care of a patient. When it appears this has occurred, the patient or (where appropriate) the patient's partner, close relative or friend should be informed and have the circumstances fully explained.*
- *Committing an error is not in itself an indication of incompetence or negligence. Health professionals should be supported in (and indeed applauded for) reporting errors honestly and openly without fear of unreasonable consequences. The safety of patients must always be paramount in assessing what should happen next.*
- *Health professionals should receive help and support in coming to terms with having caused unintentional harm to their patients and in learning lessons from any errors in order to prevent further accidents. It is also the responsibility of health care organisations to identify and learn from system failures which may be the root cause of accidents, including individual errors.*
- *Medical accidents have a real and deep impact on peoples' lives. Patients (or their partners or relatives) who have been affected by a medical accident have a perfectly reasonable right to explanations and to seek apologies, assurances and/or financial compensation for injuries caused where appropriate.*

Do you agree with the principles contained in this charter? If so, you can "sign-up" to it by e-mailing admin@avma.org.uk Please give your name, title and where you work. You can sign-up as an individual or on behalf of your organisation. Alternatively write to: 'Charter', AVMA, 44 High Street, Croydon, CRO 1YB.