

**Sexual relationship with a patient
(09HDC01403, 8 December 2009)**

Sports doctor ~ Sexual relationship ~ Professional and ethical standards ~ Right 4(2)

A man complained that his wife and a sports doctor had a sexual relationship while the doctor was still providing her with medical services.

The sports doctor had been treating the patient for Achilles tendonsosis for approximately two months when a sexual relationship commenced. He then saw the woman two more times in relation to her Achilles tendonosis, — first as a follow-up appointment, and secondly when she arrived for an unbooked appointment at his rooms. The sports doctor also arranged further tests and treatment for her.

It was held that the sports doctor breached the Medical Council's zero tolerance guidelines in relation to a doctor's sexual involvement with a current patient. He did not properly terminate the professional relationship. The sports doctor's actions were both unprofessional and unethical, and breached Right 4(2).

The findings highlight the need for more education of medical students, trainee doctors and practising doctors about professional boundaries, including the steps needed to terminate a professional relationship with a current patient, and the inappropriateness of providing medical services to the doctor's friends or family.