

REPORT ON WORKSHOP C: ACCOUNTABILITY

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The following were the issues discussed in this workshop, and points raised during discussions.

1. What are the ethical and legal implications of accountability in clinical practice?

- Everyone is responsible for his/her action.
- There should be standardisation of procedures to be carried out identically in the same in the same hospital.
- There should be good documentation, i.e. it should be clear and well defined.
- That all treatment is to be prescribed beforehand and not given over the phone. Consensus was reached that it is illegal to administer non-prescribed treatment but it is very daring to challenge doctors.
- That there should be double checking before giving drugs.
- That junior staff /newly qualified staff should be given adequate training

2. Who is really responsible for the patient?

- All members of the multidisciplinary team are responsible, including the clerk and the maid.
- In a ward setting the nurse is responsible for every decision taken regarding the patient including the prescription of drugs.
- The training of newly qualified staff has also been emphasised.

3. How can accountability be encouraged in clinical practice?

- It was agreed that education is very important for being accountable, i.e. every member of the team should be knowledgeable, and that on-going educational programmes/ in service training should be compulsory.
- Standardisation of procedures and the setting of guidelines and policies are very much needed.
- The importance of the Patient's Charter was also discussed.
- Communication systems should be enhanced, e.g. the setting up of regular meetings amongst all members involved.