

15 February 2013

**Our Ref: IAT/ME/F13/5185**

General  
Medical  
Council

Mr C Rock

**By e-mail only**

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Dear Mr Rock

Thank you for your e-mail of 18 January 2013. You ask for information relating to the death of a GP patient. You explain that you would like to know the number of these cases and what action was taken in respect of them.

I am afraid that our fitness to practise information is not held in such a way that would enable me to readily identify cases of this type. The only way to determine whether a particular case meets the criteria that you are interested in would be to examine the case in great detail. An examination of this nature is likely to take some 30 minutes per case.

I have identified more than 100 cases for the last 2 years that would appear to involve the death of a patient. However, without doing a great deal of analysis on each case it is not possible to determine whether these cases relate to the patient of a doctor. For example, many of them are likely to relate to the signing of death certificates - not necessarily in respect of a patient of the GP who has signed the certificate. Searching for the word 'death' 'deceased' 'dies' will return cases of this nature.

Given the above I consider that an exemption set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) will apply to the information you have requested.

To explain; Section 12 of the FOIA allows a public authority not to undertake a search for information requested where they estimate that the cost of complying with the request for information would exceed the 'appropriate limit'. The Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004 have set the appropriate limit at £450 for public authorities such as the GMC. This is equivalent to two and a half days work. In estimating the cost the public authority can take into account the cost of determining, locating, retrieving and extracting the information requested. We reserve the right to refuse requests that would cost in excess of this limit and will significantly impact on our business.

To analyse the cases I have identified, in order to attempt to answer your request would take some 50 hours. Given that this is in excess of two and a half days I consider that

Section 12 of the FOIA, as mentioned above, is engaged in respect of the information you seek.

You have the right of appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal please set out in writing your grounds for doing so and send it to Julian Graves, Information Access Manager at the address given above. Mr Graves e-mail address is; [jgraves@gmc-uk.org](mailto:jgraves@gmc-uk.org). You also have the further right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. If necessary, Mr Graves will provide you with details of how to appeal to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ellen', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Ellen  
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