

## The Ones That Got Away

**This is the first of a series of mini articles about injuries or problems that are often missed or misunderstood by solicitors and or experts.**

We have considerable experience in rehabilitation and coupled with our works as GPs means that we follow up patients after accidents or health problems on a permanent ongoing basis. We therefore see the full long term extent of problems, often long after patients have been discharged from hospital and indeed after a claim has been settled.

We have spent considerable time developing a system to screen claimants thoroughly to ensure that all relevant details are in our reports for both claimant and defendant solicitors to ensure that our reports provide a sound basis for the settling of a claim by either party. It is in response to comments and queries from various solicitor clients that we have decided to produce this series.

### Anxiety Problems

Part of our strength as generalists with an interest in musculoskeletal medicine is that we cover all aspects of health in a holistic manner. It is, therefore, a matter of routine to assess not only a patients physical problems but their psychological health as well.

In the last year we have found seven cases of previously undetected and unrecognised Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. A previous audit demonstrated that in RTA cases that we have dealt with 8.9% of claimants suffered some form of significant anxiety related to travel or driving for a period following their accident. In approximately half of these cases this was significantly intrusive and ongoing at the time of the medical examination. There are simple validated screening questionnaires which we suggest all experts use in accident cases. It is not necessary to be a psychological expert to identify problems which need a more expert evaluation.

The majority of these had not been picked up during screening interviews with their solicitors.

It remains an important aspect of our work to try and assess individuals in an holistic way to ensure that all aspects and all relevant effects of the accident are documented.

### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined as an illness or disorder which is triggered by an emotionally distressing event which is outside the range of normal human experience. Post Traumatic Stress is no respecter of age, sex or culture, and can, given specific circumstances, affect anyone at any time. In some cases the effects of the disorder may last for years and be devastating to both those who suffer and to their families. The sufferer is often thought to have a "change of personality" and not infrequently the link to trauma is not recognised.

Sufferers will classically have symptoms in three categories: Autonomic over arousal, panic attacks, poor concentration, jumpy, sleep problems; Re-experiencing, recurrent, unwanted, intrusive thoughts, images, sounds, smells, nightmares, flash backs; and Avoidance, Avoiding thoughts and things associated with event ~ even amnesia, feeling cut off emotionally, loss of interest in things previously enjoyed.

### Appointment Availability

Instruction letters received into the office will be given the first available appointment at the venue closest to the client's home address. The website has a list of venues covering the Midlands and the North of England.



Pailton Court, Coventry Road, Pailton, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 0QA  
Telephone: 01788 834855 (direct line work) | Facsimile: 01788 833021  
**Website: [sbmedicolegal.co.uk](http://sbmedicolegal.co.uk)** | Email: [enquiry@sbmedicolegal.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@sbmedicolegal.co.uk)

## Staffing Changes

Gill Fouracre has retired. Gill has been there since I began the Medical Legal Service. We will miss her and it will be strange in the office without her. However, Gills retirement has prompted a review and time of change.

Karen Cresswell and Jayne Brigg are taking over and will be responsible for all office management. Both are very experienced in health care and have worked in my General Practice for some time. They have been used to helping Gill out at busy times and we hope that the changes will be seamless.

This, with the launch of our website [www.sbmedicolegal.co.uk](http://www.sbmedicolegal.co.uk), will hopefully manage to streamline the use of email both for solicitor clients and clients requiring medicals.

## Phone Numbers

Our present phone numbers remain unaltered. The main office line is 01788 834855.

## Emails

We have three admin emails. Solicitors are free to contact us by phone or letter, but email is often quicker for queries.

[enquiry@sbmedicolegal.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@sbmedicolegal.co.uk) for all general matters e.g. costs, the need for an urgent opinion.

[appointments@sbmedicolegal.co.uk](mailto:appointments@sbmedicolegal.co.uk) for all administration of appointments, Solicitors requests for appointments, changes, availability, and chasing appointments.

We would ask that on letters of instruction if claimants have email addresses that these are included. Many claimants change mobile phone numbers but keep an email address. We also hope that more and more claimants confirm by email and that we will be able to chase them to attend by email.

[queries@sbmedicolegal.co.uk](mailto:queries@sbmedicolegal.co.uk) is there to deal with any queries about reports or any other aspects of our services after an examination.