

Turning away patients

Sample letter

All doctors have an ethical responsibility to treat a patient in an emergency. Outside this emergency situation, it is the doctor's decision if they will or will not treat a patient (unless the doctor has a contract that requires that you see particular patients). If a doctor chooses not to treat a patient there must be an alternative source of care available, and that source of care is made known to the patient.

In some cases, the doctor/patient relationship breaks down such that the doctor believes he or she is no longer able to treat the patient. Medical Protection Society (MPS) has developed this standard letter to provide to patients when you wish to end the professional relationship. You do not have to give reasons for the breakdown in the relationship.

Standard Letter

Date

Dear Patient

I write to inform you that the professional relationship has broken down and cannot be restored. I therefore cease to be your medical practitioner effective from the date of this letter. Please ring my reception on (*phone number*) and inform them as to where copies of your records are to be sent.

Yours sincerely,

In situations where there is a possibility of a complaint from the patient it is wise for the doctor to seek advice from your indemnity provider. It is also recommended that you keep a copy of the medical records you are transferring to assist you in any possible complaint. Legally however, once you have transferred these records, you have also transferred the requirement to retain them under the Health (Retention of Health Information) Regulations 1996. More information on medical records is available on the NZMA Advisory Service Resource 'The Medical Record'.

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Need more help?

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