

Joint statement of the GMC and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) on the regulation of doctors providing telemedicine services to patients in the UK.

The provision of telemedicine services raises challenges in relation to the regulation of cross-border healthcare, and patients' access to redress if treatment goes wrong.

The GMC and RQIA believe there should be clarity as to where regulatory responsibility lies in cases of cross border healthcare. This statement sets out our jointly agreed position on where responsibility lies in relation to patient safety in this area of medical practice.

We agree that it is in the best interests of patients treated in the UK that all doctors who are delivering telemedicine services to them are regulated to UK standards. Those who are commissioning telemedicine services from doctors based outside the UK are advised to ensure that doctors are appropriately qualified and regulated. They should demonstrate via their regulatory body, or through other means, that they are up to date and fit to practise.

The role of the GMC in the regulation of telemedicine

The GMC is not a regulator of medical services but of medical practitioners. The GMC regulates doctors who are on its register. It cannot require doctors practising outside the UK to register with the GMC, or to hold registration with a licence to practise with the GMC. Doctors may of course choose to hold a licence to practise even if there is no legal requirement to do so. The GMC can, and does, regulate doctors who are based outside the UK but on the GMC's register.

For doctors practising outside of the UK, the GMC can, and does, regulate doctors who are on the GMC's register.

The role of the system regulators in the regulation of telemedicine

System regulators have statutory powers in relation to the regulation of independent health care and to also carry out reviews of commissioning and providing NHS and HSC organisations. RQIA carries out these functions in Northern Ireland.

The system regulators encourage all those who commission telemedicine services from outside the UK to ensure that those providing the services are appropriately qualified and regulated.