General Medical Council

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London NW1 3JN

Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]
[redacted]

25 September 2026

Nicholas Walker
HM Area Coroner for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton
Coroner's Office
Castle Hill
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8UL

Dear Mr Walker,

Reference: Hayley Pamela Dowell - [redacted]

I am writing in response to your letter of 1 September 2026 enclosing your report into the death of Hayley Pamela Dowell. I am sorry to hear of the circumstances surrounding Ms Dowell's death, and I extend my sincere condolences to her family and friends.

I appreciate the opportunity to review your report and respond to the concerns that you raise. I am responding as the Medical Director and Director of Education and Standards at the General Medical Council (GMC).

In summary, your report raises concerns that UK citizens travelling abroad for cosmetic surgery may do so without receiving sufficient information in advance about the risks involved. You are also concerned that, once abroad, patients may be offered additional procedures carrying significant risks shortly before surgery, sometimes accompanied by a financial incentive. This may leave patients with insufficient time to reflect, seek advice or make informed decisions, particularly if there is also a language barrier.

We recognise the seriousness of these concerns and the potential risk to patients. We wholeheartedly support patients being given relevant information about the risks of treatment in a way they can understand, as well as sufficient time and support to consider these risks and make a fully informed decision. As I explain in more detail below, these expectations are fundamental to the professional standards we set, including for individuals who offer cosmetic interventions.

Our role and remit

The GMC is the professional regulator of doctors, physician associates, and anaesthesia associates – medical professionals - in the UK. We work with medical professionals, patients and other stakeholders to support good, safe patient care across the UK. We set the standards that our

registrants and their educators need to meet, and help them achieve them. If there are concerns these standards may not be met, or that public confidence in medical professionals may be at risk, we can investigate and take action if needed.

We set the values, knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of all medical professionals registered with us when caring for patients and working with colleagues. Our core guidance on professional standards, *Good medical practice*, and the more detailed guidance which supports it, form the *professional standards* we expect all medical professionals to follow.

As you note, however, the individuals in question are based abroad and may be outside the remit of UK regulators, including the GMC. Moreover, our core responsibility is to regulate registered medical professionals. Responsibility for public information about the risks of treatment abroad does not sit principally with the GMC. We consider that the Department of Health and Social Care, working with other relevant parts of government, is better placed to consider whether further public information or other measures are required. I note that you have also written to the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

We have nevertheless, published a patient guide, which explains what to expect of doctors who carry out cosmetic procedures. This includes a section specifically for people considering treatment abroad.

We have previously discussed concerns about overseas cosmetic treatment with colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Care. We understand that the Department is working with the Turkish Ministry of Health to strengthen bilateral cooperation and to support the safety of UK patients who seek treatment in Türkiye. We were also pleased to see that, in August 2025, the Department announced a new online campaign to give people advice before travelling overseas for cosmetic or medical treatments. We hope that this will help increase public awareness of the risks.

In July 2025, we raised a related concern in our written evidence to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee's inquiry into the health impacts of breast implants and other cosmetic procedures. This relates to individuals who provide cosmetic surgery, are based abroad, and are not registered with the GMC, but who travel to the UK to advertise medical services with the aim of encouraging members of the public to undergo cosmetic surgery overseas. We referred to anecdotal evidence suggesting that some members of the public have felt pressured into agreeing to travel abroad for surgery without providing informed consent. We advocated a strengthening of the law to help address this specific issue.

The professional standards

Although the concerns in your report relate principally to treatment provided by overseas practitioners who may not be registered with the GMC, we hope it is helpful to explain our expectations where UK-registered medical professionals are involved.

A key principle of our *Decision making and consent* guidance is that all patients have the right to be listened to, and to be given the information they need to make a decision and the time and support they need to understand it.

Our *Cosmetic interventions* guidance says that medical professionals must give patients clear, accurate information about the risks of the proposed intervention and any associated procedures. Patients must be given the time and information they need to reach a voluntary and informed decision about whether to go ahead with an intervention. They must be told that they can change their mind at any point (paragraphs 22, 24 and 26).

Marketing must be responsible and must not minimise or trivialise the risks of interventions or exploit patients' vulnerability. Medical professionals must not claim that interventions are risk-free. They must also not use promotional tactics in ways that could encourage people to make an ill-considered decision, or allow financial or commercial interests to affect their recommendations to patients or their adherence to expected good standards of care (paragraphs 49, 52 and 56).

Finally, *Delegation and referral* makes clear that medical professionals considering referring a patient to a service or professional based overseas must be confident that it would be safe and appropriate to do so (paragraph 16).

Regulatory oversight of doctors in Türkiye

If you have any concerns about the fitness to practise of named doctors working in Türkiye who are not registered with the GMC, we would advise notifying the relevant Turkish authorities and professional bodies, as set out below.

Doctors in Türkiye are regulated by the Ministry of Health (Sağlık Bakanlığı), which is responsible for licensing and authorising medical practice, while the Turkish Medical Association (Türk Tabipleri Birliği, TTB) and its regional chambers provide professional representation and disciplinary oversight. Physicians must hold recognised qualifications, comply with ethical and professional standards, and maintain mandatory malpractice insurance.

Ministry of Health

[redacted]

Turkish Medical Association (Türk Tabipleri Birliği, TTB)

[redacted]

For the reasons explained above, our role and remit in addressing the specific areas of concern is limited. However, I hope my response demonstrates that we continue to highlight these serious risks to those who are best placed to take appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Medical Director and Director of Education and Standards