



What Can a Practice Do When a Patient Harasses a Staffer?

News

11.14.11

Richele Taylor, an attorney in the Columbia office, was quoted in the November 14 *American Medical News* article "What Can a Practice Do When a Patient Harasses a Staffer?" Doctors know that they risk legal action against their practice if a physician or employee complains about sexual harassment or racist remarks from another doctor or employee and no action is taken. But physicians take the same risk if they do not deal with complaints about a patient harassing one of their employees. Employee legal action because of inappropriate touching, sexual comments or racist remarks from patients falls under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Practices should have written policies and training for employees. Policies should include guidelines on how to defuse or minimize potentially uncomfortable situations. Richele said: "Employees need to know that their report about the situation is going to be confidential and there will be no retaliation. And once you determine how serious the situation is, you can talk to the patient and get the patient's side of the story."

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