

An essential component of a safe system for managing test results is communicating effectively with staff and patients about what the test results show and what needs to happen next. The Medical Protection Society cited ambiguous/unclear comments from GPs to read out to patients as being a significant risk i.e. 'abnormal, no action'.<sup>1</sup>

It is suggested<sup>2</sup> that all clinical and non-clinical staff ensure they fully understand an agreed set of practice-wide terms, words and abbreviations related to the results handling process.

The following are examples that clinicians might use to communicate what the results mean and action that needs to be taken.

<b>Examples of comments that REQUIRE action</b>		
Add/Change Medication	Contact patient and inform them	Make an appointment for bloods
Kidney function slightly abnormal – repeat in 1 week – phone patient	Make an appointment for fasting bloods	No action today – workflow to usual GP to advise
Repeat test(s)	Prescription required	Prescription issued
Inform Pharmacy	Tried to contact patient – failed please try again	Inform patient acceptable
Please repeat in xxxxx weeks	Repeat as per DMARDs protocol	
Make URGENT in person / telephone appointment with DOCTOR		
Make NON URGENT in person / telephone appointment with a DOCTOR		
Make in person / telephone appointment with PRACTICE NURSE		

<b>Examples of comments that DO NOT require action (or action has taken place)</b>		
Results are normal	Normal see task	Continue on current prescription
Inform patient when they phone in	Patient has been informed	Noted reduced kidney function – no action needs to be taken
Review already organised	Document has been seen – no action required	Results slightly out with normal range but acceptable and no further action is needed
GP has spoken to patient	Nurse has already spoken to patient	

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.medicalprotection.org/uk/press-releases/MPS-highlights-prescribing-as-one-of-the-top-risks-in-general-practice>

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found on the NHS Education for Scotland website at: <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-theme/initiative/patient-safety-and-clinical-skills/safe-results/our-outputs.aspx>