

## Ethics 101 Response – Managing your reputation

The physician's primary responsibility is the patient's well being. Any concern about the maligning of the physician's reputation by the specialist is secondary.

In this case, the specialist caused direct and willful harm to the relationship between the physician and her patient. This is a complex longitudinal relationship that is built on mutual trust and respect and is central to the patient's care over the long term.

The criticism of one physician by another is often, as in this case, fueled by lack of information and understanding and is often unprofessional. There are venues to report truly incompetent care.

If the specialist presumed the right to criticize the physician, then the specialist also had an obligation to ensure that his/her information was both correct and complete before rendering an opinion to the patient.

In this case, the specialist did not attend to his/her responsibility to ensure that he/she had complete and correct information prior to rendering an opinion to the patient about the incompetence of the physician.

The correct course of action for the physician would be to personally call the specialist to discuss the matter and to inform the specialist of the circumstances. The physician should also ask the specialist to personally discuss with the patient a revised opinion based on the additional information provided by the physician.

Should the specialist not be open to discussion, the physician should send a registered letter to the specialist informing them of the harm that they have done to the physician-patient relationship and that, without personal discussion and resolution, the physician will intend to follow this up through a third party, likely the College.

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