

What does the work doc know?

So, you've been ill, you're injured, you're starting a new job, your job's made you sick – all reasons your employer might want a doctor to give you the once over. But is the doctor really qualified to make an assessment? A new TUC guide for safety reps gives pointers on what training and skills you should expect from any doctor undertaking pre-employment checks, health screening, change of job, rehabilitation, treatment or medical 'capability' to work assessments. The guide points out that just being on the medical register means any doctor can offer their services to employers as an expert or adviser. "Many of those doctors who practice in occupational medicine, dealing with capability assessments, and other medical reports, have had no specialist training and may have only limited knowledge of many of the areas that they should be dealing with such as the health problems of hazards in the workplace, rehabilitation to work or adjustments at work," the TUC guide says. It says a doctor can only claim to be a 'specialist' if they are listed on the General Medical Council's 'specialist register', something that can be checked online. The guide adds that many of the doctors who provide occupational health services are not 'specialists' either. It spells out the professional qualifications that the GMC says establishes a doctor is "knowledgeable in occupational medicine theory practice and delivery." Some GPs have the more basic diploma in occupational medicine, which would mean they are capable of providing some rudimentary health screening and advice. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that, at a minimum, doctors working in occupational medicine should have this diploma. In most instances trade union safety reps will have had more detailed and workplace specific training than any general practitioner, combined with a practical knowledge of hazards and health risks in the workplace that surpasses that of many doctors, regardless of their qualifications.

- [Medical referrals in employment - Is the doctor appropriately qualified?](#) A short guide for employees and their representatives. [GMC specialist register](#).