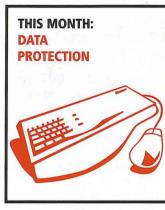
TIP OF THE MONTH



UNDER THE 1998 Data Protection Act, everyone in the workplace has a legal duty to protect the privacy of information about

individuals, writes Alison Ryan. The act applies to anyone who handles or has access to information under four categories: Data controllers:

Data users:

Data subjects; Data processors.

The key things to remember

about data are that it must be: Processed fairly and legally;

■ Processed for limited purposes and in an appropriate way; Relevant and sufficient for the

purpose; Accurate:

■ Kept for as long as is necessary and no longer;

Secure:

Only transferred to other countries that have suitable data pro-

tection controls From time to time, your patients may want to find out what per-

sonal data is kept about them - a perfectly normal and importantly, a perfectly legal request. If this does occur, try to keep the following points in mind:

■ Check the identity to make sure you give information only to the person who is entitled to it. Perhaps check date of birth, post-

code or family names. ■ If you are not sure about their identity and cannot check, you should suggest that the person

writes in for the information. This

way, if it is a third party working

on behalf of the patient - for

example, solicitors - you can per-

haps identify them by company-

headed paper or a company stamp. ■ Never give out any information

about another person. For example, you should never give friends

address details.

■ Do not be bullied into giving information. Ask your manager or someone authorised to confirm the law.

and relatives of employees their

The Data Protection Act can feel like a bit of minefield at times, but it is there to protect your patients and protect you as a business. For consultants running their own private practice, it is worth

looking into some training. Alison Ryan is client relationship manager at practice management specialist PHF Services Ltd Phone: 0870 190 9391

Web: www.phf.uk.com

Processed in line with individual's rights;