



Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health

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[REDACTED]

Mrs Catherine Mason
HM Coroner for Leicester City and South Leicestershire
The Town Hall
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[REDACTED]

- 7 MAY 2014

Dear Mrs. Mason,

Thank you for your letter about the death of Lalitaben Patel.

Your report advised that, Mrs Patel died from post-operative problems following an elective laparoscopic cholecystectomy surgery by a locum doctor at the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

I am pleased to note that your concerns about the recruiting and management practices at the Trust have now been addressed. However, your report raised wider concerns about the practice for appointing locum doctors elsewhere.

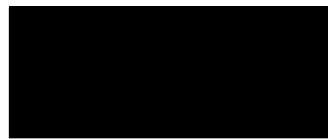
The issue of quality assurance of locum doctors working in secondary care is clearly important. In November 2013, a high level Secondary Care Locum Doctor Working Group (established by the Health Minister [REDACTED]) made a series of recommendations to strengthen existing arrangements and these were welcomed by the Government. They include:

- Strengthening General Medical Council appraisal guidance for doctors particularly the need to report on any locum work undertaken.
- Strengthening guidance to responsible officers (ROs) to ensure they check with doctors that locum work has been recorded.
- NHS Employers Pre-Employment Standards being strengthened to include a seventh standard - covering the need for an employer to be provided with information about an individual locum's RO, dates of revalidation, and appraisal; and that the employer should check an individual is not only fit for practice but purpose.

- NHS Employers publishing a standard audit guide for pre-employment locum checks, providing greater confidence in audits and checks.
- Strengthening guidance for Trusts, emphasising the desirability of using framework locum agencies, with a section included on best practice when using non-framework agencies.
- NHS Employers issuing guidance to Trusts suggesting the development of a set of core measurements on locum usage, which will give boards visibility of locum usage and quality assurance processes.
- Providing guidance to Trusts on best practice with regards to quality assurance controls, which sets out minimum requirements.

I continue to welcome progress against these recommendations. I hope that this information has been helpful and I thank you for bringing the circumstances of Mrs Patel's death to my attention.

Yours sincerely



JEREMY HUNT