

HM Senior Coroner for Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Coroner's Office
Enterprise Centre
Furthergate
Blackburn
BB1 3HQ

11 October 2016

Dear Mr Singleton

I am writing in response to a Section 28 ruling from HM Senior Coroner. This follows the tragic death of Harry Gill who passed away on the 2nd June 2016. This was followed by an investigation and inquest which concluded on 24/8/2016. I am writing in my role as the Clinical Director for NHS Pathways which is the clinical triage platform for the national NHS 111 service. I am [REDACTED], BA, MSc, MB ChB (Sheffield).

The Coroner has requested that NHS Pathways review its management of the vomiting pathways and report on any improvements that have been made.

To aid this process NHS Pathways entered into discussions with the Clinical and Quality Lead for the North Western Ambulance Service (NWAS) to better understand their concerns regarding the structure of the vomiting questions. We agreed there was scope to enhance our content and commenced a review with our clinical team.

This review has now concluded and I can report the following changes to the vomiting questions with rationale.

CURRENT QUESTION

The current question presented to the call handler and then asked of the patient is;

'Have you vomited blood or faeces?'

Call handlers at NWAS reported a degree of confusion with the question and not enough supporting information if the patient answered positively. At present call handlers may ask the question as it appears without making full use of existing supporting information to probe directly about coffee ground vomiting, and a caller may not realise that coffee ground vomit is blood

PROPOSED CHANGES

We have amended the question to be more specific and allow for a more focussed interrogation of the nature of the vomit, in particular the presence of coffee ground like matter in the vomit that can indicate a localised gastric bleed. The question that will be asked in the next release of the algorithms will be;

Have you vomited any of the following?

A1- Coffee ground vomit

Supporting information presented to the call handler;

This means the individual has brought up or vomited dark brown or black material that looks like soil or coffee-grounds. Blood that has been in the stomach often looks like this.

A2-Blood

Supporting information presented to the call handler;

This means any blood visible in vomit.

This also means any blood in or near the mouth.

The blood may have been forcefully vomited up or just be oozing or welling from the mouth.

A3- Faeces

Supporting information presented to the call handler;

This means vomit that looks and smells strongly of faeces (poo).

This work has been concluded and will be issued to all NHS Pathways sites for the next release in the spring of next year. In addition we have further enhanced our site training package for the management of vomiting in recognition of the difficulties in identifying the nature of vomit remotely via third party telephone triage.

I am happy to answer any further enquiries from HM Coroner.

Yours sincerely


Clinical Director NHS Pathways