



Royal College
of Surgeons
of England

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

Ms Caroline Topping
Assistant Coroner for Surrey
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
GU22 7AP
c/o [REDACTED]

25 January 2021

Dear Ms Topping,

Thank you for sending a copy of your Regulation 28 Report – Action to Prevent Future Deaths dated 1st December 2020 following the conclusion of the Inquest touching on the death of Peter James Michael Unsworth, addressed to [REDACTED] as President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. I am responding on behalf of [REDACTED] as Chief Executive of the RCS (England).

I was saddened to read the circumstances described in your report, and wanted to record my sympathy to Mr Unsworth's family.

We are grateful to you for bringing these circumstances to our attention and we have considered the matters of concern that you highlight in your report carefully.

The Royal College of Surgeons (England) is clear that information sharing is an essential part of the provision of safe and effective care. The need for effective and appropriate information sharing is a key part of our core guidance document for surgeons, Good Surgical Practice, and underpins our series of associated resources, and specifically our Good Practice Guides.

For example, section 1.3 of Good Surgical Practice provides clear and detailed guidance to surgeons on the way that they can meet the standards of the GMC's Good Medical Practice. This section specifically sets out that Surgeons must ensure that accurate, comprehensive, legible and contemporaneous records are maintained of all their interactions with patients, as well as ensuring that sufficiently detailed follow-up notes and discharge summaries are completed to allow another doctor to assess the care of the patient at any time. Section 1.2 of Good Surgical Practice describes the requirement for surgeons to ensure that patients

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receive satisfactory postoperative care and that relevant information is promptly recorded and shared with the relevant teams, the patient and their supporters.

The RCS also has engaged with the development of – and endorses - the detailed advice published by the Professional Record Standards Body and specifically their Standards for the Structure and Content of Health and Care Records.

More widely in the area of supported decision making with patients we provide detailed advice and guidance to surgeons and patients through our Consent: Supported Decision Making Good Practice Guide, and in the area of working with colleagues we provide extensive good practice guidance through The High Performing Surgical Team and Surgical Leadership: a guide to best practice.

As we hope the above demonstrates, we are committed to ensuring that all surgeons and those involved in the care of surgical patients are supported to deliver the highest standards of surgical care to patients.

We would also nevertheless reassure you that we will continue to consider the circumstances you describe in your report, and specifically the matters of concern you identify in your desire that actions are taken to prevent future deaths. Specifically, we will ensure that we consider this in detail within our programme of standards and good practice guidance review and development for 2021, and throughout our supporting wider communication and awareness raising around this activity as part of our continuing efforts to ensure all patients receive the highest standards of surgical care.

We have also shared your correspondence with our colleagues within the British Orthopaedic Association to enable them to do the same.

Yours sincerely,




Chief Executive