



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From the Lord Bethell
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation

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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

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Mr Andrew Walker
HM Senior Coroner, North London
HM Coroners Court
29 Wood Street
Barnet EN5 4BE

15 December 2020

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 26 November 2020 about the death of Neville Bardoliwalla. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for medicines.

Firstly, I would like to say how sorry I was to read the circumstances of Mr Baroliwalla's death and I offer my most heartfelt condolences to Mr Bardoliwalla's family and loved ones at what must be a distressing time.

I note that this is the second Prevention of Future Deaths report you have issued to the Department of Health and Social Care about the disposal of controlled drugs. I wish to assure you that we recognise the importance of having methods to dispose of medicines waste safely, that protect the public from harm.

Disposal of unwanted medicines is an essential service of the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework¹, to be provided by all community pharmacies in England. This requires them to accept unwanted medicines from private households, residential care homes and children's homes. These returned medicines are then stored securely and safely by pharmacies until they are collected for safe disposal.

NHS England and NHS Improvement, as commissioners of NHS Pharmaceutical Services, have arrangements in place for a waste contractor to collect the unwanted medicines from pharmacies at regular intervals for safe disposal. This ensures that the public have an easy method of returning unwanted medicines to pharmacies for safe disposal, helping to reduce harm to themselves and environmental damage caused by inappropriate disposal methods.

Patients or their families and carers, should be advised by community nursing staff, GPs or pharmacists to return any unwanted or unrequired medicines to their local community pharmacy for safe disposal. This recommendation is made in National Guideline 46 *Controlled Drugs: safe use and management*², published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in 2016.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-pharmacy-contractual-framework-2019-to-2024>

² <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng46> [1.5.11]

I should also explain that work is underway to reduce waste medicines in the first place. Medicines optimisation is a key workstream within NHS England's Medicines Value Programme³ that aims to ensure that the right patients get the right choice of medicine, at the right time. Through focusing on patients and their experiences, the goal is to help patients to improve their outcomes; take their medicines as intended; avoid taking unnecessary medicines; reduce wastage of medicines; and improve medicines safety.

In addition, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, has asked Dr [REDACTED] the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England, to carry out a review of over-prescribing in the NHS. This work is looking at reducing inappropriate prescribing, with a particular focus on the role of digital technologies; research; culture change and social prescribing; repeat prescribing; and transfer of care. The report of the review will provide recommendations to reduce overprescribing to improve patient safety and reduce medicines wastage.

I hope this response is helpful. I am grateful to you for bringing these concerns to my attention.



LORD BETHELL

³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines-2/value-programme/>