

27 October 2023

Caroline Topping
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
Surrey
GU22 7AP

Dear Ms Topping,

I write in response to your regulation 28 report regarding the sad death of Reginald Edwin Bourn. I would like to express my sincerest condolences to his family.

We have considered the circumstances surrounding Mr Bourn's death and I have addressed below the matters of concern on which NICE can comment.

Lack of national guidance on the placement of nasogastric decompression tubes

In your report you explained that while there is national guidance in relation to the placement of nasogastric feeding tubes, there is not the same for nasogastric decompression tubes.

NICE has not published guidance on the management of small bowel obstruction, and so has not made recommendations on nasogastric decompression. Your report has been shared with our topic selection and prioritisation team to consider the need for NICE guidance in this area.

Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) report on the placement of nasogastric feeding tubes

You expressed concern that the HSIB made recommendations on the placement of nasogastric feeding tubes, having found that the use of pH strips is potentially unreliable and that incorrect X-ray confirmation and interpretation is the most common cause of misplacement incidents.

In the NICE guideline on [nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition](#) [CG32] we recommend that:

The position of all nasogastric tubes should be confirmed after placement and before each use by aspiration and pH graded paper (with X-ray if necessary) as per the [advice from the National Patient Safety Agency \(2011\)](#); further [patient safety alerts for nasogastric tubes have also been issued in 2013](#) and [2016](#). Local protocols should address the clinical criteria that permit enteral tube feeding. These criteria include how to proceed when the ability to make repeat checks of the tube position is


limited by the inability to aspirate the tube, or the checking of pH is invalid because of gastric acid suppression. (Recommendation 1.7.17)

Both the HSIB's report on the placement of nasogastric tubes and your report concerning the death of Mr Bourn have been shared with NICE's guideline surveillance team to see if an update to this recommendation is required.

Instructions for nasogastric decompression tubes

On your point that 'feeding tubes have instructions both as to how to insert them and as to how to ensure that they are correctly placed [while] decompression tubes have neither', we believe the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) would be best placed to consider this issue as the UK's regulator of medical devices.

Yours sincerely,

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Chief executive