

[REDACTED]
29th February 2024

Mr Michael Pemberton
Assistant Coroner
Black Country Coroner's Court
Jack Judge House
Halesowen Street
Oldbury
B69 2AJ

Trust Headquarters
Health and Wellbeing Centre
Sandwell General Hospital
Lyndon
West Bromwich
B71 4HJ

Dear Mr Pemberton,

Re: Mr Karmchand Gulzar (deceased)

[REDACTED]
Inquest: Black Country Coroner's Court – 13 December 2023

Thank you for your Prevention of Future Deaths letter of the 29 December 2023 raising the concerns you have regarding the care pathway for acute abdominal conditions at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. I would like to assure you that since this very sad case the Trust has continued to make improvements to the pathway which should now resolve the issues you have raised.

The Management of Acute Abdomen guideline that was in use at the time of this incident has been updated and re-issued in June 2023. This guideline was created in consultation with the Doctors working within the Emergency Department and the Patient Safety team, to ensure the appropriate learning is incorporated into the process. The guideline aligns with the BMJ Best Practice recommendations.

The updated guideline has introduced a flowchart of the pathway which was not previously included in the policy, at the time of this case. The need for early CT scanning is also emphasised throughout the guideline. There is also a process whereby all Junior Doctors discuss their concerns for patients with an acute abdomen presentation and potential surgical referral with their Consultant prior to referral, to discuss the patient needs and check the referral has been made correctly.

In order to embed the new guideline, it has been sent to all applicable staff, published on our intranet site and discussed within team meetings and appropriate forums. The guidance is highlighted at induction sessions for new doctors and in appropriate teaching sessions. Staff have also been reminded to include outstanding referrals at the handover discussion. Mr Gulzar's case has also been anonymised and discussed with the clinical teams within the Emergency and

Surgical departments to ensure our teams are aware of the learning from this case. To assess the efficacy of the activities described above, an audit of the Acute Abdomen pathway is planned in March 2024.

In relation to the concerns regarding the recognition of deterioration not being recognised due to Mr Gulzar’s mental health condition and the concerns of his family/carers being ignored; there is considerable work being done by our Patient Experience team to support improvement in this area. Listening to and valuing the expertise that exists within carers and families is crucial to providing personalised care and treatment, and personalisation is a key-cornerstone of the Trust's Fundamentals of Care programme. Through this work a 'Carers Passport' with supporting patient documentation concentrating on the person, is being trialled in selected wards to understand the benefits this will reap for carers across the organisation. This trial will take place in April 2024, and we will then look to roll this out across the Trust.

The supporting documentation prompts carers to describe their loved one’s individual needs and how they may express things like pain, for example.

Carers have told us that they want recognition for what they bring to the care team and this project will formalise the carers' relationship with the care team as a partner in care with us.

Additionally, we have identified training and education in patient experience and communication as Trust priorities. Every session delivered in the last year stresses the value of carer involvement, their specific expertise and knowledge and the benefits in experience and outcomes that these bring.

The Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) will be commencing 1st April 2024, and one of the four main themes for learning and quality improvement for the Trust has been identified as ‘Vulnerable People’, with the first year focussing on Mental Capacity and the management of patients who may lack capacity. This will work alongside the Fundamentals of Care programme which has communication as a top priority, and the two workstreams will work together to support our vulnerable patients.

I trust this information will provide you with reassurance regarding the concerns raised in your report, however if I can assist with anything further please let me know.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive