

Assistant Coroner K Hayes
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
Surrey
GU22 7AP

18 November 2024

Sent by email:



Dear Assistant Coroner Hayes,

RCR Response to Regulation 28: Prevention of Future Deaths report issued on 8 August 2024 in relation to the death of Gillian Patricia Stokes.

I was very sorry to read about the death of Mrs Gillian Stokes and I would like to express my deepest condolences to Mrs Stokes' family.

We take the matters raised in your report very seriously and I hope this reply will be helpful in outlining how we are committed to learning from them and supporting our members and Fellows to develop and maintain excellent medical care.

I sincerely apologise for the delay in sending this response. The failure to reply promptly is an isolated incident that we have reviewed and I can confirm that we have put additional measures in place to refine our process when responding to important correspondence such as your report.

You have noted that there is a relative lack of guidance in relation to possible radiation induced sarcoma in patients who have had a previous breast implant and also a concern in relation to duration of follow up.

Whilst radiotherapy is an effective treatment it is unfortunately associated with radiation-induced sarcoma. Although this is a rare complication it can be devastating and I am saddened to hear that this was a complication of the life-saving radiotherapy Mrs Stokes received for her breast cancer in 2013.

The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) is a charity which works with our members and fellows to improve medical care across the specialties of Clinical Radiology and Clinical Oncology. Clinical Oncologists lead services which deliver radiotherapy and Clinical Radiologists lead diagnostic and interventional services. Both faculties operate across a wide spectrum of practice including in relation to breast pathology. We develop the curriculum in our specialties (which the General Medical Council approves) and the RCR offers support for trainers and trainees and runs the professional examinations in both specialties. We also

promote excellence in professional practice within our specialties including by producing a range of publications, such as recommendations for the delivery of high-quality radiology services. The RCR itself, however, does not commission or provide any direct clinical care.

Training according to the curriculum within both Clinical Radiology and Clinical Oncology covers the nature and effects of radiation, including the potential for developing complications such as radiation induced sarcoma, the steps to minimise the risk of such an occurrence and the possible ways to identify this if it occurs.

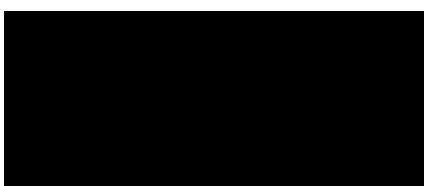
Risk-benefit is a fundamental concept in therapies involving radiation and is also a relevant consideration in relation to follow-up as many tests, such as CT, themselves carry risks from the radiation they entail. Such considerations are particularly important for rare complications, for conditions where treatment may be challenging whenever the condition is identified and also for conditions separated in time by a long and unpredictable period from an initial exposure.

The RCR does not produce the ABS Best Practice Diagnostic Guidelines which were referenced by the clinician who assessed Mrs Stokes, and as the radiologist who gave evidence stated the RCR does not have a dedicated guideline publication on this rare area.

The RCR does, however, produce other relevant guidance. In 2019, the RCR published the *Guidance on screening and symptomatic breast imaging, fourth edition*. This guidance is currently undergoing a review led by the British Society of Breast Radiology, which is an independent organisation and one of several Special Interest Groups with Memoranda of Understanding with which the RCR works. As the next version is developed we have tasked the authors with considering the matters you have raised and also asked that all modalities are considered.

I am grateful to you for bringing these matters of concern to our attention and for giving us the opportunity to respond. Once again, I do apologise for the delay in our response and express my deepest condolences to Mrs Stokes' family and loved ones.

Yours sincerely,



RCR President

