



Department of Health & Social Care

From [REDACTED]
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

39 Victoria Street
London
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Miss Isobel Thistlethwaite
Assistant Coroner for Rutland and North Leicestershire
HM Coroner's Office
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicestershire
LE3 8RA

By email: [REDACTED]

7 April 2025

Dear Miss Thistlethwaite,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 10th February 2025 sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about the death of Anne Towlson. I am replying as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for Public Health and Prevention.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mrs Towlson's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to her family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning, and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report highlights concerns over the inability to secure any medical record information from the Turkish Hospital or from the company that organised Mrs Towlson's trip to Turkey, the upselling of certain procedures in Turkey without the normal cooling-off period, and whether Mrs Towlson was fit for surgery. It also raises troubling details about the lack of post-operative guidance and after-care provided before she left the country.

Specifically, I have noted in your report the lack of information on whether the standard pre-assessment questions provided to Ms Towlson in Turkey were satisfactory in determining whether she was fit for surgery. We are aware that some countries or clinics providing healthcare tourism conduct pre-assessment checks that may not match UK regulatory standards, and we encourage providers treating UK nationals to meet international best practice on pre- and post-operative procedures. Such transparency and standardisation are important to reduce potential risks to patients and improve patient care in the UK and overseas.

We are considering the impact medical tourism is having regarding patient safety and are engaging with the Turkish Government to improve the patient pathway. The UK Government is also considering how we can most effectively communicate with those considering medical treatment abroad, to ensure people are better informed about the risks of surgery and help them to plan accordingly. To protect patient safety, we understand the need to ensure appropriate aftercare, including considering when it may be safe to travel home.

In preparing this response, my officials have also notified NHS England and the Care Quality Commission to inform them of the issues raised.

I hope this response is helpful in setting out how seriously the UK Government is taking the issues raised in your report.

Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

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