

24 September 2021

Our ref: FOI/25190

Lyndsay Eccleston
Email: request-778399-fdac7ab2@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Lyndsay

Re: 66 Blood Patch Patient Review

I refer to your Freedom of Information (FOI) request and your subsequent email requesting an internal review of Trust response. Please find below further response.

(1) Request

It now transpires that there were patients who were a part of cohorts 1 + 2 included in this review. Can you, therefore, confirm why these 66 were selected?

(1) Response

The information which was collated for the structured judgment review of 66 patients was conducted at a point in time. The review identified 66 patients who had one or more blood patches but had not attended the neurology recall.

(1) Query

Can you advise why some patients who were included in this review were also a part of cohorts one and two? Were these patients all patients of Dr Watt? What date ranges are these procedures for?

(1) Query Response

All patients who either attended the neurology recall or had a structured judgement review completed were former patients of Dr Watt. The timeframe was from 2010 to 2017.

The structured judgment review was of the medical records of former patients of Dr Watt who had an epidural blood patch but did not attend the Neurology Recall. The service was able to identify patients who were invited to attend an appointment but because this was either declined or patient was unable to attend, then a structured judgement review was completed. Any patient chose not to attend the recall then a structured judgement review was also undertaken.

The service has been able to identify one structured judgment review that was not required but completed even though the patient attended the recall. Any

patient who is concerned regarding this process or the outcome of the structured judgement review should make contact with Mrs Clare Lundy, Interim Co-Director for advice and support. Mrs Lundy can be contact by phoning the Neurology Advice Line on 0800 980 1100, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) from 9am to 5pm.

(3) Request

How does this review differ from the 2016/2017 internal review of 200 blood patch patients?

(3) Response

The recent review of the 66 patients was undertaken using a structured judgement review template. This particular template was not available to use in 2017.

(3) Query

Can you please provide a copy of this structured judgment review template? Other than it wasn't available in 2017, can you please outline the differences between this template and the 2017 blood patch review?

(3) Query Response

Please find attached structured judgment review template.

No formal template was used by the reviewer in 2017. Diagnostic criteria was applied and recorded on a spreadsheet detailing if the epidural blood patch was appropriate, not appropriate, approved or not approved.

(7) Request

Why were patients included in this review, excluded from giving their accounts of what happened? This is particularly important as you have already acknowledged concerns with note-taking and record- keeping of blood patch patients.

(7) Response

All patients who attended the neurology recall had the opportunity to discuss their care and treatment as a former patient of Dr Watt. The Belfast Trust is not aware of any patient who has been excluded from giving an account of their experience. This was evident by the number of calls to the Neurology Advice Line. Many other patients have chosen other ways of sharing their experience. Any patient who wishes to discuss their care should make contact with the Neurology Advice Line and ask to speak to Mrs Clare Lundy, Neurosciences Service Manager. The Neurology Advice Line number is 0800 980 1100. This advice line is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding weekends.

(7) Query

You have advised this review was for patients who did not attend a recall appointment. Patients have yet to be asked for their experience of the patches which would be important for any investigation. Can you clarify why the decision to exclude patient participation was made?

I have also raised concerns that recall consultants refused to discuss blood patches with patients. This has been reported multiple times in writing and during multiple in-depth calls to the neurology helpline with assurances of call-backs which unfortunately did not happen. These concerns were also raised during a zoom call with the Belfast Trust, Trust Board, and Department of Health. I'm concerned from your response that these issues have not been recorded, but more importantly, addressed. Please can you check this?

(7) Query Response

The Belfast Trust is unable to respond to any concerns which have been raised directly with the Department of Health.

No patient was intentionally excluded from detailing their experience to the Belfast Trust. Any patient who would wish to share their experience as a former patient of Dr Watt should contact the Neurology Advice Line and request to speak with to Mrs Clare Lundy, Interim Co-Director. The Neurology Advice Line number is 0800 980 1100. The phone lines are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank / public holidays).

I am sorry to hear that some patients were not offered the opportunity to talk about their blood patch when they attended their appointment. The purpose of a consultation at the neurology recall was to ensure that the patient's current diagnosis, management plan and medications were appropriate for their condition and ongoing care and treatment. During patient consultations time was made for patients to ask questions. Any patient who has any additional questions regarding their care and treatment should make contact with the Neurology Advice Line.

I trust that the above information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Public Liaison Service