



Royal College of
General Practitioners

Professor Nigel Mathers FRCGP
Honorary Secretary

Mr Andrew Harris
Coroner for the Inner Southern District of Greater London Borough of Southwark
The Coroner's Court
1 Tennis Street
London SE1 1YD

15 January 2014

Dear Ms Kearsley

Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths – Mrs Amna Umer Ahmed (deceased)

Thank you for your letter addressed to the College Treasurer, [REDACTED], which has been passed to me for response as Honorary Secretary as I have responsibility for responding to requests from coroners. I apologise profusely for the delay in responding to your request which is due to a changeover in staffing responsibilities within the organisation.

On behalf of the College, I set out below a brief description of the remit of the Royal College of General Practitioners and comments on the specific concerns you raise in your report with regard to general practitioners: possibility of generally low awareness of the condition of Sudden Adult Cardiac Death in general practice and apparent lack of awareness of guidelines available to guide GPs on circumstances for urgent referral of patients who might be suspected as being at risk.

The role of the College

The Royal College of General Practitioners is a registered charity under Royal Charter and is the largest membership organisation in the United Kingdom solely for GPs. Founded in 1952, it has over 44,000 members who are committed to improving patient care, developing their own skills and promoting general practice as a discipline. We are an independent professional body with enormous expertise in patient-centred generalist clinical care. Through our General Practice Foundation, established by the RCGP in 2009, we also maintain close links with other professionals working in General Practice, such as practice managers, practice nurses and physician assistants.

As well as running the postgraduate Membership examination (MRCGP) which is now required for doctors to qualify as GPs, the College also provides continuing professional development (CPD) for its members, and these continuing programmes are also available to non-members of the College. However, not all GPs are members of the College, and older GPs may never have joined. The General Medical Council holds the register of all who are considered able to practise as GPs, and it is to the GMC that revalidated doctors will be notified..

Similarly, it is not for us to comment on the performance of any individual GP and the information set out below is solely to show you what we do in the context of training and advice to our Members.

Coroner's concerns on low awareness amongst GPs of SAD and apparent lack of guidelines for GPs on management of at risk patients

Currently all doctors wishing to follow a career in general practice in the UK are required to undergo a 3 year programme of vocational training for general practice, based on the College's GP Curriculum. (The curriculum forms the foundation for GP training and assessment across the UK, prior to taking the College's Membership Examination (MRCGP) and is relevant to GPs throughout their career, including preparation for revalidation)
<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/gp-training-and-exams/gp-curriculum-overview.aspx>

Cardiovascular disease is extensively covered in the Curriculum. Parts of RCGP Curriculum Statement 15.1 Cardiovascular disease in Primary Care: a guide for GPs. ([REDACTED]

[REDACTED], are particularly relevant in this case namely:

- The section on family history from ch.2 Prevention of cardiovascular disease, and related reference list
- Chapter 6 'Cardiac arrhythmias' which diagnosis of arrhythmia (mentioned in your report)
- Chapter 11 'Emergency care' covers diagnosis/further treatment of patients presenting with relevant symptoms. Photocopies of these sections of the Curriculum are attached for ease of reference.

More generally, other sources of guidance about Sudden Adult Cardiac Death syndrome are to be found on the website of the British Heart Foundation (which aims to provide help to both patients and their families and to healthcare professionals)

<http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/publications-search-results.aspx?m=simple&q=Sudden+adult+cardiac+death+syndrome> and the European Guidelines on cardiovascular disease prevention in clinical practice (version 2012) - available online: <http://www.escardio.org/guidelines-surveys/esc-guidelines/Pages/cvd-prevention.aspx>

We would support your suggestion of the need for joint working on raising awareness amongst GPs of Sudden Adult Cardiac Death syndrome with the appropriate specialist primary care society and have consulted [REDACTED] the Medical Director of the British Heart Foundation, an active College member, for his thoughts. As yet no response has been received. I will forward a copy of the response from the BHF as soon as I receive it.

Meanwhile, I hope you find these comments helpful.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]