



Department  
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Health

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Mr Christopher Dorries  
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13 FEB 2014

*Dr M. Dorries,*

Thank you for your letter about the death of William Alfred Andrews.

Your report advised that, during heart surgery, a syringe cap was inadvertently introduced into the patient's heart, causing a blockage which contributed to his subsequent death.

In summarising Mr Andrew's case, you suggested;

- Ensuring that the cap of a bulb syringe or similar should be a different colour to the rest of the equipment to avoid surgeons using a syringe with the cap still in place.
- A standard procedure for checking for syringe caps (where used) at the end of the operation, such as there is with swabs, noting that only some syringes are manufactured with a cap, which may complicate the situation.

I am aware that you have contacted the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA), which is the body with responsibility for medicines and devices (including syringes), and that officials there are gathering information on this case, with a view to providing evidence to the inquest when it reconvenes.

I am pleased to note that the MHRA has made significant progress in discussions with Rocialle - the manufacturers of the syringes and have written to let you know that the manufacturers;

- will now supply the syringe without the cap;
- have issued a safety notice to all UK customers; and

- have agreed to make syringes without caps available if customers wish to exchange stock.

In addition, [REDACTED] Director of Patient Safety at NHS England, has informed me that he has written to you about the work of the taskforce to look at surgical 'never events' to make sure that these events are eradicated from NHS surgery.

He also highlighted the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) revision of their good practice guidance and provided information on other relevant guidance.

In light of these developments, I hope that your concerns have been addressed. I am grateful to you for bringing the circumstances of Mr Andrew's death to my attention so swiftly and highlighting this important issue. I believe that the actions already taken will indeed prevent future deaths.

*Yours sincerely*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Hunt', with a horizontal line underneath.

**JEREMY HUNT**