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Royal College of
General Practitioners



Honorary Secretary

Ms Joanne Kearsley
HM Area Coroner - Manchester South
Coroner's Court
Mount Tabor
Mottram Street
Stockport SK1 3PA



29 October 2013

Dear Ms Kearsley

Rule 43 – Coroners Rules report – Dorothy Townley (deceased)

Thank you for your letter addressed to the College's Chief Executive which has been passed to me for response as Honorary Secretary. On behalf of the College, I give below our comments on the inquest report.

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.

As a general observation, it would seem that the GP looking after Mrs Townley was obviously concerned about his patient and was conscientious about carrying out home visits, including making an unscheduled visit to Mrs Townley to see her and to check that the specified blood test had been carried out.

However, I would agree with the concerns listed about the management of the actual burn injury and the wound assessment chart by the District Nursing staff.

From the perspective of general practice, I would comment that the College can influence the training of general practitioners through the guidelines for best practice it sets out in 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>

In this case, there are issues about communications between professionals and the following sections of the GP Curriculum are of particular relevance in the case of the care of Mrs Townley:

"Being a GP

"As a GP you should:

1.4.2 Understand the processes of referral into secondary care and other care pathways

1.4.3 Manage the interface between primary and secondary care, including unscheduled care and communication with other professionals"

"Patient Safety and Quality of Care

"As a GP you should

4.2 Reflect on the risks to patient safety in a care pathway in which a variety of healthcare professionals are involved, looking at interface issues and be able to comment on the ways in which, as a GP, you can work to minimise these"

"The GP in the Wider Professional Environment

"As a GP you should

1.2.3 Work effectively with the full range of primary care services, and across the primary-secondary care interface for the benefit of patients."

Additionally, the case highlights the need for general practitioners to systematically audit their work and to carry out significant event analysis where appropriate. The SEA is a standard method employed in GP appraisal process. The document Good Medical Practice for GPs (RCGP, 2008) sets out the principles underpinning the revalidation and appraisal process.

<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation-and-cpd/~media/Files/Revalidation-and-CPD/CPD%20Credits%20and%20Appraisal/GoodMedicalPracticeforGPsJuly2008ashx.ashx>

I hope you find these comments helpful.

Yours sincerely

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[Redacted name]

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