

Dr [REDACTED]
Joint Honorary Secretary

Ms Caroline Topping
HM Assistant Coroner for the County of Surrey
[REDACTED]

26 May 2021

Dear Ms Topping,

Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths - touching on the death of Ann Coles

Thank you for your report of 13 April 2021. I am responding on behalf of the Royal College of General Practitioners as Joint Honorary Secretary to Council. Firstly, can I convey our condolences to the family and friends of Ann Coles. I was saddened to read of Ann's passing.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is the largest membership organisation in the United Kingdom solely for GPs. It aims to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and to act as the 'voice' of GPs on issues concerned with education; training; research; and clinical standards. Founded in 1952, the RCGP has just over 54,000 members who are committed to improving patient care, developing their own skills and promoting general practice as a discipline.

I observe that a matter of concern from your inquest is as follows:

The evidence showed that a potential side effect of amiodarone medication is that it can cause toxicity which effects the lungs and can cause fibrotic changes. In her evidence the consultant cardiologist who treated Ann in her final illness raised the concern that there is no requirement for lung imaging to be undertaken when patients are prescribed amiodarone on a long term basis which in her view was a glaring gap in the oversight necessary for the effects of the medication.

By way of background, a number of medications are used to control the rhythm of the heart, most commonly beta blockers and calcium channel blockers. Amiodarone is a medication that has been used for many years and whilst effective, is known to have a range of short and longer term side effects. Details can be accessed in the British National Formulary [here](#). Given these side effects it considered to be at least a second or third line drug and for this reason, would be

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initiated by a cardiologist or consultant physician, who would frequently then monitor the patient on a regular basis.

A review of the evidence shows that the respiratory side effects of amiodarone can be relatively frequent – about 5%, with higher doses making side effects more common (see [here](#)). The British National Formulary makes a recommendation regarding the regular assessment of thyroid function and that the patient should have a Chest X Ray prior to starting treatment with amiodarone. There is no other recommendation regarding the ongoing monitoring of lung function or a periodic chest X Ray.

The Royal College of General Practitioners is not a regulating organisation and especially not for medication although we do have responsibilities in guiding standards and providing education. Regulatory responsibility of medication lies with The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Given the concerns raised in your inquest, I recommend that you request the MHRA comment upon this matter. Contact details are [here](#).

I trust that this reply is helpful and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Dr [REDACTED]
Joint Honorary Secretary of Council
Royal College of General Practitioners

Cc: Professor [REDACTED] President of the Royal College of Physicians