**Update on Notification to GP Practices following the death of a patient in Musgrove Park Hospital**

Following the death of a patient in hospital, we have always endeavoured to inform the GP Practice where the patient was registered as a patient, as soon as possible. The normal process of informing a practice is via our electronic EPRO system where the certifying doctor completes a Notification of Inpatient Death (similar to a discharge summary) which when issued, will be sent directly to the practice by email. This notification includes whether a patient has been referred to HM Coroner and what the outcome of that referral was.

However, on occasion there is a delay in the notification letter being issued which we know can either be due to the certifying doctor not completing the process by issuing the letter which in turn is not picked up by the Bereavement & Medical Examiner Office staff, or following referral to HM Coroner it can take several days to know an outcome for certain complex cases leading to a delay in the completion of the Notification.

We have tried various methods over the years to try and ensure that safeguards are in place to reduce the instances of notifications not being issues or significant delays, but sadly these have not worked. Following some recent feedback from a GP, we have revisited this issue as we realise the impact that not informing a practice in a timely manner can have, not only on the family, but also on the GP the person was known to.

The issue was raised at our Trust EOL Operational group on 16th February as it was felt that because it is attended by various stakeholders from different departments and specialities across Primary and Secondary care, we would be able to discuss the options on how to improve notification to GPs. As a result of this discussion, we were advised that there was a way of creating a brief letter template on the EPRO system that the Bereavement & Medical Examiner Officers could all be given access to. The template is easily populated onto the system and once the date of death edited, in a couple of clicks a brief initial notification can be made directly to the GP practice.

We now have the template set up with the following wording:

*Dear Dr –* ***auto GP details***

*Re:* ***auto patient details***

*This is a brief courtesy note to inform you that the above patient, who was registered with your practice, died during their recent admission.*

*Date of death………………..*

*Official notification will follow, including whether the case has been referred to the coroner.*

We began using the template as soon as it was available to us and now as soon as we are notified of a death and have the full patient details, we complete and issue the letter meaning GPs are informed as quickly as possible. A formal Notification of Death will then follow once all of the information is available. This new positive step in our processes has been added to our daily routine and will be included in the service Standard Operating Procedure and we hope that as a result there will be no further instances of GPs not being informed of a patient’s death. Should there be any further occurrences, please contact the office directly on 01823 343753 or email [bereavementsupportoffice@somersetft.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavementsupportoffice@somersetft.nhs.uk)

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