

Never Events
Department of Health

19 November 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Expansion of list of ‘Never Events’: recommendation to make hospital acquired pressure ulcers an ‘never event’

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to expand the list of “never events”. Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) is the national charity for patient safety and justice and seeks to play an active role in all of the Department of Health and NHS work on patient safety, bringing a patient perspective based on over twenty five years’ direct experience of advising and supporting people affected by medical accidents (‘patient safety incidents’) and close liaison with other patients’ groups, the health professions, and other stakeholders.

AvMA supports the expansion of the list of ‘never events’ and wishes to strongly suggest that the list is supplemented by another never event: Acquisition of pressure ulcers in hospital .Huge amounts of human misery and death, not to mention millions of pounds in remedial treatment, could be saved with better nursing care directed at risk assessment and prevention of pressure sores. It is unacceptable that preventable pressure ulcers are often acquired in the very place where patient should feel most assured of good quality attentive nursing care – in an NHS acute hospital (or private hospital for that matter). Whilst the preventability of pressure ulcers can be a complex issue, it is possible to address and to develop appropriate definitions and criteria so as for it to be a practical to make hospital acquired pressure ulcers a ‘never event’. This has already been done in the United States.

Making preventable pressure ulcers a ‘never event’ would provide a strong incentive to improve basic nursing care with huge benefits for patients and the NHS. It genuinely should never be the case that pressure ulcers are acquired in hospital because of the lack of appropriate care.

Yours sincerely

Peter Walsh

Peter Walsh
Chief Executive