



PRESS RELEASE

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CQC ACCUSED OF BLIND SPOT OVER NHS TRUSTS WHO IGNORE PATIENT SAFETY ALERTS

A new report by the patient safety charity, Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) has found that Care Quality Commission ("CQC" - the national regulator of the NHS in England) is failing to take any action over NHS trusts who fail to implement patient safety alerts. Although overall compliance with alerts has improved dramatically since the charity started publishing reports on this, information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act established that even the trust with the worst record - Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust - had not received a single warning from the CQC or any other body over its non-compliance. Southend had failed to comply with a total of 7 alerts as at the end of January 2014. Two of these alerts were five years past the deadline for completion, and a further two were over three years past the deadline. Despite this the trust board had not even discussed its non-compliance with alerts and on its website, the CQC gives a complete bill of health to the trust.

AvMA chief executive, Peter Walsh, said:

"Whilst we are pleased with the improvement in compliance, patients have the right to expect 100% compliance when it comes to patient safety alerts. These alerts deal with literally life and death issues and are meant to be mandatory. It is a scandal that some trusts are still prepared to ignore them and that the CQC and others have turned a blind eye."

Professor Brian Toft OBE, Professor Emeritus of Patient Safety, Coventry University and Professor of Patient Safety Brighton and Sussex Medical school, said:

"I welcome AvMA's report for shining a bright light on an area of medical practice which is of great importance. Patient Safety Alerts are issued to keep patients from suffering avoidable harm and it is shocking to find that the Care Quality Commission is not taking strident action against those who do not comply"

Lisa Richards-Everton, an avid patient safety campaigner since her husband Paul died after a medication error which led to a patient safety alert said:

“There are no excuses for Trusts’ non compliance with Safety Alerts. Patients are being left at grave risk. The numbers of scenarios and non compliance are totally unacceptable. The CQC needs to assure the public of compliance and take a strong line on Trusts that still fail to comply”

AvMA's research found that there were 141 instances of alerts which were past the deadline as of 30th January 2014 which had not been implemented. This compares with 2,124 when they first reported in February 2010 and 455 in the previous report in August 2011.

However, every alert not complied with represents a serious risk to patients, and there are 14 examples of trusts who have still not complied with three or more patient safety alerts for which the deadline is past.

There were 13 cases where the deadline has been exceeded *by over 5 years*.

ENDS