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NHS IN WALES NOT DOING ENOUGH TO PROTECT PATIENTS

A review of Welsh Health Boards' compliance with Patient Safety Alerts has found that not a single health board has complied with all alerts which are already past the deadline. Two health boards, Hywel Dda and Betsi Cadwaladr had failed to comply with 23 and 15 alerts respectively. Health Inspectorate Wales, which has responsibility of regulating patient safety in Wales, had failed to take any action to ensure health boards comply with the alerts, which are supposed to be mandatory. The report "Implementation of Patient Safety Alerts in Wales" is published today by Action against Medical Accidents ('AvMA' - the UK charity for patient safety and justice).

AvMA chief executive, Peter Walsh, said:

"Whilst we are glad to see some health boards have made very significant improvement in complying with these "life or death" alerts, this report is shocking proof that some health boards, Health Inspectorate Wales and Welsh Assembly Government are not taking patient safety seriously enough. Patients are being left at unnecessary risk and some may have suffered or died as a result of inaction. We all appreciate that mistakes can happen, but not putting in place safeguards which are known to be vitally important to protect patients is inexcusable. There is an urgent need to review how patient safety is regulated in Wales".

Key findings of AvMA's report are:

- Whilst there has been a significant improvement in compliance generally, it remains the case that not a single Health Board in Wales had complied with all patient safety alerts for which the deadline for completion had already passed, in spite of the reports of June 2011 and August 2012.
- There were still 15 instances of patient safety alerts not complied with over five years past the deadline.
- There were 61 instances of an alert not having been complied with, compared with 140 in 2012. This represents an improvement of over 50% on the situation in 2012.

- The best rate of compliance was Powys Teaching Health Board, which had only 2 alerts outstanding compared with 15 in 2012.
- The worst rate of compliance was at Hywel Dda Health Board, which had not complied with 23 of the alerts which had passed the deadline for completion. However, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is also of particular concern with 15 alerts not complied with.
- Just as worrying as the continued non-compliance with patient safety alerts by health boards in Wales, was that Health Inspectorate Wales, which is responsible for monitoring and regulating the NHS in Wales with regard to safety, could find no record of them having taken up this issue with a single health board.

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