



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01448

Name of petitioner

Grant Thomson

Petition title

IMPROVING AWARENESS OF THE CANCER RISKS IN ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the links between organ transplantation and cancer by providing appropriate guidance and education to medical professionals, patients, their families and carers; to improve health warning and patient information on the cancer risks associated with the long term use of immuno-suppressant medications and to introduce regular dermatological clinics for these patients to improve on early skin cancer screening and detection levels.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

This issue has been raised with NHS Lanarkshire. As a result, I have been informed that regular dermatology screening clinics will be established in Monklands hospital to improve skin cancer detection and cure levels in renal transplant patients.

This is a positive start however action requires to be taken across the NHS as a whole in order to ensure all authorities/trusts deliver standardised care that organ transplant patients require following their surgery.

At present there are education and awareness programmes and annual skin screening clinics for patients in some regions but not in others.

Petition background information

My partner of nearly 12 years, recently passed away.

The cause of death was listed as Metastatic Malignant Melanoma.

My partner had received a kidney transplant in November 2004 and began to feel unwell in late June 2012.

Less than one month later she was dead.

By all accounts the transplant operation was a success however sadly she lost her life to skin cancer which had spread throughout her body before she noticed any symptoms. By the time she was admitted to hospital she was already beyond the point of cure.

She was diagnosed with Malignant Melanoma and died 5 days later with it having spread to almost all her internal organs.

Shortly before her death, her consultant (not a renal or transplant specialist) informed us that the likely cause of the cancer was her kidney transplant and resulting immunosuppressant medication she required to take for the rest of her life. The doctor advised that, unfortunately, skin cancer was a very common problem in transplant patients.

Neither my partner or myself had ever been made aware of the extent of the risks she was at from skin cancer following her operation however a quick 'Google' shows multiple research dating from as far back as the 1990's that shows the high risk of skin cancer in organ transplant patients.

Various reputable medical research establishments indicate the risk of developing skin cancer in organ transplant patients is as much as 65 to 100 times greater than the general population and recommend that transplant patients should have regular skin examinations for the rest of their lives, such is the high risk of developing this disease.

My partner never received any skin examinations nor was she advised to regularly check herself for any possible signs of skin cancer.

Furthermore, given my partner attended three different doctors in the week prior to her hospital admission in mid-July 2012, and none of them expressed any concern about a growth on her ear the size of an acorn (which transpired to be the primary source of the cancer), it would appear that the seriousness of this issue is unknown within certain circles of the medical profession in Scotland.

Consequently, her family are calling for the Scottish Government to introduce the measures called for in this petition to avoid any other transplant patient and their family experiencing the ordeal that we have all gone through.

The petition is calling for:

Standardised education of all medical professionals, patients and their families/carers as to the high risk transplant patients have of developing skin cancer;

Introduction of regular 3-monthly dermatological screening clinics for transplant patients - ACROSS ALL NHS AUTHORITIES (it already happens in some - annually - but not others) in order to improve early detection and cure rates of skin cancer;

Improved health warnings and improved patient information literature on immunosuppressant medications which have been proven to be a contributing factor in the high incidences of skin cancer experienced by organ transplant patients. (The most common immunosuppressant agent used in organ transplantation is Ciclosporin - it is listed as a Group 1 carcinogen by the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) alongside compounds such as Asbestos, Arsenic, Plutonium, Solar Radiation and X-Rays yet there are no specific health warnings supplied with the medication.

My partner is survived by her parents, brothers and our two young children.

Please urge the Scottish Government to take action to stop this tragedy happening to another family.

Please 'SIGN FOR SHAZ' to stop this tragedy happening to another family.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/SignForShaz>

Related information for petition

Organ Transplant Patients have a 40% to 70% chance of developing skin cancer following their operation

This equates to a 65-100 times greater likelihood than the general population

Ciclosporin (immuno-suppressant medication used post-transplant) is A Group 1 Carcinogen

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

08 / 11 / 2012

Comments to stimulate online discussion

This gravity of this issue is not fully appreciated in Scotland in certain areas of the medical profession.

As far back as 2001 my partner was refused Life Insurance when she divulged that she would require a kidney transplant some time in the future.

Insurance companies were aware of the risks to transplant patients as far back as 2001.

In July 2012 in NHS Lanarkshire, 3 different doctors did not consider a large growth on Sharon's ear could possibly be cancerous. These 3 separate consultations took place with a period of 8 days when my partner had less than one month to live.

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