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Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee

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Your Ref
Our Ref SC/DM/ SPPPC/2
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Consideration of Petition PE1448 – Improving the Awareness of the Cancer Risks of Organ Transplantation

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

This response is from Dr Stephen Cole, Chair of the NHS Tayside Board Donation Committee and the Lead Clinician for Organ Donation in Tayside.

In the first instance may I express my condolences to the Petitioner's partner following their death from skin cancer.

Organ transplantation is a definitive treatment for renal failure but as with all surgical procedures and transplantation procedures it does carry some significant risks. However, organ transplantation has the potential to dramatically change the lives of those recipients allowing a return to normal function and to regain the normal activities of daily living.

NHS Tayside does not carry out organ transplantation but we do provide on going continuity of care for those patients who have received an organ transplant. My understanding is that within the Board area, there is full and frank discussion with the patients prior to listing for transplantation of all the risks involved with transplantation including the increased risk of cancer. I am aware that our local Dermatology Department already carries out such surveillance. I will also ensure that they are made aware of the concerns raised by this petition.

Transplantation is still a relatively rare procedure throughout Scotland and the numbers of patients that will be under the care of the referring clinician at Board level within Tayside are relatively low.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Yours sincerely

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