

PE1448/C

Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Howlett

Ref: Consideration of Petition PE 1448

I am writing in response to your letter dated 14 December 2012, to provide views on behalf of NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee petition "*Improving awareness of the cancer risks in organ transplantation*".

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is the UK organ donation and transplantation organisation and is responsible for raising awareness of the need for more donors; managing the NHS Organ Donor Register (a database of 18.7m who have signed up to donate organs after their death); working in partnership with UK-wide hospitals to ensure that opportunities for donation are identified and progressed; employing Specialist Nurses for Organ Donation (SNODs) in hospitals to discuss donation with family members; and retrieving and allocating donated organs.

It is widely recognised that those people who have had a solid organ transplant have a greater risk of developing some types of cancer than the general population. In 2010, NHSBT, in collaboration with clinicians, published the risks of cancer in the UK transplant population.

These findings, which are consistent with those published from single centres and from other countries, were presented at national and international meetings as well as being published in the international peer-reviewed journal *American Journal of Transplantation* (volume 10, pages 1889-96). The increased risk of some cancers (including skin cancer) is well recognised and the impact of cancer is mitigated in a number of ways:

1. Information for the transplant candidate (NHSBT has published, in collaboration with the British Transplantation Society, guidelines about the information that should be given prior to transplantation and this includes the increased risk of some cancers:

(http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/pdf/guidelines_for_consent.pdf)

2. General advice for reduction of risk (such as, for skin cancer, avoidance of excess sun exposure);

3. Advice for the patient that he/she should be aware of the increased risk of skin cancer and report any new findings or changes in the skin to their doctor.

Several organisations have published information leaflets for transplant recipients (such as National Kidney Federation (<http://www.kidney.org.uk/Medical-Info/transplant/txcancer.html>), British Association of Dermatologists (<http://www.bad.org.uk/site/879/default.aspx>) and many hospitals do also provide their own advice leaflets.

The statutory responsibilities of NHSBT focus primarily on organ donation from deceased donors, patient selection, organ allocation and patient follow-up: thus, while NHSBT is not responsible for developing and implementing clinical guidelines, we are very keen to work with clinicians and other stakeholders through the professional and statutory bodies to help with this task. With the comprehensive national registry held by NHSBT and the excellent clinical support (primarily through the Advisory Groups), NHSBT is well placed to help develop and publicise such guidelines.

Yours sincerely

James Neuberger

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Organ Donation and Transplantation
NHS Blood and Transplant