

British Medical Association
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David Stewart MSP
Convener
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament

Scotland National Office

10 January 2013

Dear Mr Stewart

PETITION PE1448

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.

Thank you for inviting the BMA to make a submission in relation to Petition PE1448. We would like to make the following comments:

The petition focuses mainly on the risks of long-term use of immunosuppressants and the lack of awareness of this. This is not something the BMA has a policy on. As a general principle, however, we support the provision of information to enable people to make informed decisions. It also seems sensible to ensure that medical practitioners treating patients post-transplant are aware of any evidence of a link and are able to take steps (via examination or the provision of information) to increase the chance of early diagnosis.

The BMA's report, *Building on progress: where next for organ donation in the UK?*, discusses the use of 'higher risk' donors (pages 39-40, which can be accessed online at: www.bma.org.uk/working-for-change/improving-and-protecting-health/organ-donation). Here we refer to the importance of getting the balance right when deciding who to include (and exclude) from donation. If you exclude all risks people will die waiting for an organ, if you extend the pool too much, recipients are put at greater risk. We support the NHS BT/BTS guidance on consent which refers to discussing with the patient the risks they might be willing to accept (clearly no donation is risk-free).

Scottish Secretary: Martin Woodrow
Chief Executive/Secretary: Tony Bourne

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Yours sincerely,

Helen Reilly
BMA Scotland Public Affairs Officer