

Information Governance Department

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Ref: FOI2020/7231

Date Received: 18th December 2020

Response Due: 20th January 2021

Date: 12th January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

INFORMATION REQUEST UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**You asked:**

According to DHSC data ([Supplementary Analysis FOI 1250644](#)) there has only been 1 medical abortion complication recorded on HSA4 forms due to use of both abortion pills (mifepristone and misoprostol) at home between January and June.

These complications, as recorded on [HSA4](#) form include a) sepsis, b) haemorrhage, and c) uterine perforation.

1. Please can you tell me the number of women your hospital has treated with each of these complications between Jan 1st and December 1st this year.
2. Please can you also tell me how many women you treated in your hospitals between Jan 1st and December 1st of this year, for incomplete abortion or RPOC, specifying the number requiring Evacuation of Retained Products of Conception (ERPC) as well. *NB. This should include the treatment of women who may have received abortion pills from independent abortion providers before attending your hospital, as well as those who may have been prescribed abortion pills by your hospital (or hospitals within of your trust).*

Please see the attached Information.

If it complies within the FOI limitations (e.g. 18-hour time limit, cost, privacy etc) please also specify the following:

- what their complication was
- whether they required a blood transfusion
- whether they required antibiotics

- The data be broken into two sections: Jan 1st to June 1st and June 1st to December 1st
- 2019 data for comparison

The Trust is unable to provide this data as it is not recorded centrally, if recorded it would be held within individual case notes. As case notes are for the care and treatment of patients, we do not ask staff to interrogate them in order to respond to Freedom of Information requests.

We understand that some of these will be due to spontaneous abortion, and others by medical induced abortion. Unless clearly stated you need not distinguish between them.

We also understand that most cases of sepsis and haemorrhage will not be formally connected with abortion, however where the possibility of a medical abortion cannot be ruled out, we ask that you include this data.

If data is unavailable for the time period(s) I have specified, please share numbers from your closest available match.

Pre-empting Barriers to receiving this Data

When similar questions have been asked of various hospitals in the past there have been two common barriers or defeaters to receiving data. I will deal with each now.

1. Personal Information

One defeater we have received in the past is that to specify the number of complications within of a trust would breach “personal information” under Section 38(1)(b), especially if that number is one or two. Please note: This project has no interest in gathering personal information, it simply wants to ascertain what is already being recorded in DHSC statistics but appears to be missing from the 2020 stats.

We are contacting you because [DHSC statistics from 2018](#) (Supplementary Analysis FOI-1187034) state your hospital reported/treated 2 of women with one of these complications (exact complication not specified). Sharing this information in 2018 didn’t breach anyone’s confidentiality even though it cites specific hospitals and tiny numbers of patients.

We also ask that you see these two previous FOI requests from [Birmingham](#) and [Lewisham hospitals](#) who were both willing to notify us when they had treated 7 patient’s with complications and incomplete abortions due to taking such pills. With one hospital even willing to detail their treatment. Not only does this suggest that these pills are causing complications uncaptured in official statistics, but it also shows that it is quite possible for hospitals to share information without breaching ‘personal information’.

The matter is brought into even sharper focus due to a [Government consultation into EMA](#) abortion at home, due to close on 26th February 2021. As hinted above, we are concerned there may be a data blind spot between DHSC statistics as recorded on HSA4 abortion notifications forms, and the real-life impact of these measures detailed in the previous FOI requests. The need for grass roots information has never been greater. In view of this, and in order to gain a better understanding of what is actually going on we hope, we hope your hospital would be willing to fully comply with our request.

2. ‘Data not held centrally’

Another common objection that has been cited in the past is that data is not held centrally and therefore to retrieve it would exceed the 18-hour cap of ‘free’ FOI requests. Due to the significant

public interest of this project we do not accept this as an objection and wish to make a number of suggestions to ensure the expedient collection of data within of the 18 hour window.

Firstly your hospital is being contacted because we know you have reported/treated women with medical abortion complications in the past. [DHSC statistics from 2018](#) (Supplementary Analysis FOI-1187034) show that your hospital treated 2 woman/women with abortion complications in 2018 so your obstetrics and gynaecology department or ante natal department should have some experience of this, and may be worth contacting.

Secondly distinct from previous requests we have decided to focus our request around a narrow list of recognised and specific procedures and symptoms like ERPC, RPOC, Blood transfusions, Sepsis, Haemorrhage etc. These should be easily searchable on your hospital system.

I trust that this information is helpful to you, however if you are not entirely satisfied with this response please do not hesitate to contact the Information Governance Department on 01257 488271. If we do not hear from you within 28 days, we will assume that we have been able to accommodate your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Lyon
Director of Operations – Surgery Division

PLEASE NOTE:

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to: Information Governance Department, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, Wrightington Hospital, Hall Lane, Appley Bridge, Wigan, WN6 9EP

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 1113