

21 July 2016

General
Medical
Council

Ms Bernie Conlon
Secretary to Inquiry
Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related deaths
Arthur House
41 Arthur Street
Belfast
BT1 4GB

3 Hardman Street
Manchester M3 3AW

Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
Website: www.gmc-uk.org
Telephone: 0161 923 6602
Fax: 0161 923 6201

Dear Bernie

Re: The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related deaths

Thank you for your email to me dated 22 June 2016 seeking, on behalf of the Chairman, updated data on the number of referrals emanating from Northern Ireland by trusts (and other doctors) of hospital doctors in respect of concerns of clinical competence, by year, from 2002 onwards. I am sorry for the slight delay in responding but it has taken me a little while to get the data.

As I mentioned in my letter to you in September 2013 the data on our current system (Siebel) only gives us reliable information back to 2006. Any information for pre-2006 would be less reliable and would not match those data we can extract from Siebel.

In the updated table you will see that we have shown 'total triages' by year since 2006 and identified those numbers by all trusts, from all doctors*, from those who are 'non-GPs', from NI trusts and two further areas described as NI doctors and NI non-GPs. To confirm the geographical location we have used either the incident location or the complainant address as being in Northern Ireland.

I hope it will help further if I explain that the numbers in the table do not add up to the total number of triages. This is because a 'triage' is counted as one complaint/enquiry about one doctor. A single complaint could lead to more than one triage if it referred to or mentioned several doctors. You may also note that some of the data in the table which I provided last time has changed – albeit only slightly. That is because complaints have been re-triaged (thereby changing the

* It is possible that a complaint from a doctor might not necessarily be from a medical doctor eg someone with a PhD.

year), and data cleansing (such as Trust or complainant details being changed, or errors being deleted).

Turning to the Northern Ireland specific data, you will see that, relatively speaking, the numbers remain small and there is some danger in seeking to identify patterns due the small number of complaints we receive from Northern Ireland. And whilst you will see that overall number of complaints from Northern Ireland has risen, the rise is not statistically significant and has also fluctuated randomly over the subject period.

In general terms you will note that in 2007 we had 5213 triages and in 2012 that figure had risen to 10,336. For the same period the number of complaints from Trusts rose from 361 to 1090. Taken as a whole the data shows a rise in Fitness to Practise complaints the GMC has received. However, you will note that since then the numbers have fallen to 9385 for the year 2015. We don't yet know why this has happened and previous research into the rise in the number showed it to be multifactorial with no 'primary cause'. Currently we don't think that we will necessarily be able to identify cause of the reverse trend.

As requested I have also included a small table which shows the number of triages which have so far, ended with a hearing at the Medical Practitioners Tribunals Service.

I hope that this response has been helpful. If you would like to discuss further do please let me know – my contact details are below.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Egerton

Assistant Director of Legal Services

0161 923 6312

anthony.egerton@gmc-uk.org

Encl:

1. Table of data 2007 – 2015.

Table of data of fitness to practise complaints 2007 to 2015

(1) The updated data as requested:

Year	Total triages	# from all trusts	# from all drs	# from all non-GPs	# from NI trusts	# from NI drs	# from NI non-GPs
2007	5213	361	391	270	16	8	8
2008	5084	378	356	245	14	1	1
2009	5729	597	435	283	12	5	4
2010	7130	853	495	327	11	4	4
2011	8775	835	656	449	15	12	11
2012	10336	1090	702	495	19	10	10
2013	9859	707	735	728	14	8	8
2014	9623	571	690	668	8	7	7
2015	9385	554	709	700	16	12	12

NB: Please be aware that **there are slight variations in the figures from 2007-2012**. This will be down to complaints being re triaged (thereby changing the year), and data cleansing (such as trust or complainant details being changed, or errors being deleted).

(2) The numbers of the triages from the above table that have so far ended with an MTP hearing:

Year	Total triages	# from all trusts	# from all drs	# from all non-GPs	# from NI trusts	# from NI drs	# from NI non-GPs
2007	276	87	20	11	4	0	0
2008	263	92	18	10	1	0	0
2009	307	107	24	13	2	0	0
2010	230	90	19	14	2	0	0
2011	254	96	24	19	4	3	3
2012	234	79	31	18	3	1	1
2013	247	81	17	17	0	0	0
2014	139	44	10	10	0	0	0
2015	17	6	4	3	0	0	0

NB: **Some of these triages are still being investigated** (especially the recent ones) and so may ultimately end up in a hearing.