

23.07.04

12 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding an update on the audit of Rheumatology Services (OQ.142/2023)

Will the Minister provide an update on the audit of rheumatology services, including the number of patients discovered to have been prescribed incorrect doses of their medication, and will she further explain whether she is aware of any other healthcare services that have suffered from similar deficiencies?

Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I thank the Deputy for his question. What I want to assure the Assembly and Islanders about is that I remain fully committed to ensuring that we have a thorough review of rheumatology services. The review by the Royal College of Physicians is ongoing. The Royal College have recommended that H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) should audit the records of patients on biological drugs to check and confirm their treatment and care is advised on 18th May. These patients have had their present care and treatment reviewed by professionally trained, specialist rheumatologists to ensure it is appropriate. What I can assure the Deputy is that once the audit has been completed, which we now expect to be the end of July; there have been some issues around circumstances in which one of the doctors could not complete due to a family crisis, but we are now expecting this to be completed by the end of July. The results need to be quality assured and then we will be able to confirm the findings regarding the inappropriate prescribing of biologic agents. While I am not aware of any concerns of inappropriate prescribing in any other services in H.C.S., the reporting to clinical governance within H.C.S., which I published last year, highlights the scale of the improvements that are required, so that we can be assured that we have the high quality and safe healthcare that Islanders deserve.

3.12.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I thank the Minister for her answer. The revelations about rheumatology services can understandably cause anxiety about whether the underlying issues that caused those problems exist in other parts of the service; record keeping being quite a key one that could easily be applied elsewhere. Could I ask the Minister what she and her team are doing right now to assess whether those same issues that caused those problems with rheumatology exist in other healthcare services and what assurances she can give us that those will either be uncovered or found to not be a cause for anxiety.

Deputy K. Wilson:

In response to the review into clinical governance arrangements, we have set up a whole workstream to establish the appropriate performance management, auditing and review of clinical care across all specialities. As you can imagine, this is taking some time. It will be data reliant, but will be strengthened by the oversight that the board will provide, who will have a relentless focus on the indicators of quality and safety. It is on that basis that I will be able to account for the Assembly on the areas of concern that the Deputy has highlighted.

3.12.2 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can the Minister confirm whether or not we have a permanent rheumatologist specialist now on Island?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, I am delighted to say that we have recruited a full-time rheumatologist. I will be making a press statement about that later today. Dr. Sofia Tosounidou, who trained in the medical school at University of Ioannina in Greece, will join as head of rheumatology on 17th July.