

Ref. No: 0671
Date: 08/02/24
Subject: Post Mortem Cardiac Device Interrogation

REQUEST

To garner a comprehensive understanding of the practices and data surrounding patients with cardiac devices, we kindly request the following information:

1. How many patients pass through your morgue each year?
2. Approximately what proportion of these have a cardiac implantable device in situ? (PPM, ICD, ILR)
3. Does the hospital morgue also take deaths from the community, or is it for inpatients only?
4. Is there a cardiac physiology department on site at your hospital?
5. If a patient has a cardiac device in situ, is it routine practice for a device check to be undertaken after death?
 - a. If yes, is the information regarding rhythm/therapies at the time of death routinely added to the patient's notes/hospital record?
 - b. If yes, is the information regarding rhythm/therapies at the time of death routinely passed on to the clinical team?
6. If no and this is not routine practice, are there ever exceptions to this, i.e., occasions where a post-death device check is requested by the clinical team?
 - a. If yes, please elaborate (for example, how often or under what circumstances this occurs).
7. We welcome any additional information or comments that might help in our investigation.

RESPONSE

St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust became a single legal entity known as Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust on 1st July 2023, as such parts of the response may be provided in two sections relating to the hospital sites of each of the legacy organisations.

1. How many patients pass through your morgue each year?

Across our 3 hospital sites approximately 4,360 deceased patients.

2. Approximately what proportion of these have a cardiac implantable device in situ? (PPM, ICD, ILR)

Section 12: cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit

A very rough approximation of 4%, however, please note that we do not record this information and would need to undertake a manual review of records to provide a specific response. The Trust estimates that this would exceed the appropriate limits.

Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust does not have to comply with a request where it is estimated that the cost of compliance would exceed the appropriate limit of £450. The appropriate limit is specified within the regulations and represents the estimated cost of one person spending 2½ working days answering the request, either wholly or partially.

3. Does the hospital morgue also take deaths from the community, or is it for inpatients only?

Yes - number included in the total above.

4. Is there a cardiac physiology department on site at your hospital?

Yes

5. If a patient has a cardiac device in situ, is it routine practice for a device check to be undertaken after death?

No

6. If no and this is not routine practice, are there ever exceptions to this, i.e., occasions where a post-death device check is requested by the clinical team?

Checks have taken place where a Coroner has requested further information regarding the activity of the device.

7. We welcome any additional information or comments that might help in our investigation.

The mortuary does not routinely remove devices prior release to an undertaker. The exception would be a device removed if the coroner had requested a post mortem examination.