



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Eluned Morgan, AS/MS
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1SN

Ein cyf / Our ref: MP/LMR

Eich cyf / Your ref:



Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Llinos Roberts

E-bost / Email:

llinos.roberts3@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 7 March 2022

Dear Minister

Update on Actions to Improve Vascular Services at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

I write to update you with an overview of the main actions that have taken place, further to my letter to you of 8th February 2022, to improve vascular services in North Wales.

In 2020, the Health Board invited the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) to review the provision of vascular surgery in North Wales. The College, in response to this request, issued two reports: the first in March 2021 and the more recent report in January 2022.

May I reiterate the Health Board's commitment to provide safe and sustainable vascular services to the people of North Wales. The Vascular Improvement Plan (enclosed), which is closely overseen by the Quality, Safety, Experience Committee and the Board, reflects, and responds to, the findings of both College reports as well as findings from other sources, such as national audits, the learning from local incidents and the patient engagement work carried out by the Community Health Council.

The Executive Team, my Vice-Chair and I are working closely with your officials and you will be aware of regular meetings, including one with Health Improvement Wales (HIW) on 7th March 2022, further emphasising the commitment to making timely and effective actions.

I would like to summarise a few of the key areas that have been progressed in the last month in order to address the main risks identified in the review.

1. Appointment of an Independent Chair for the Vascular Quality Panel

Susan Aitkenhead has been appointed to Chair the Vascular Quality Panel. This panel, convened in response to the Urgent Recommendations of the RCS report, will consider the outcomes for patients in that report as part of our commitment to ensure that our duty of candour is exercised with both patients and their families. Susan brings a great deal of national experience in this area.

The panel has commenced a review of the notes of the 44 patients in the RCS report (covering care dating back as far as 2013), including detailed vascular summaries that were not shared with the College as part of their review. It will also consider the cases of other patients that have come forward as well as those identified through internal incident reviews. As part of the review process, patients and their families will be involved and this approach will be used to inform future service reviews.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

2. Closer Working with Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been agreed in principle with Liverpool and the clinical teams have already commenced closer working on established pathways. The MoU, as recommended by the RCS, will enable development of shared Multidisciplinary Team meetings to improve the quality of decision making and recording of those decisions. Additionally, it will see Liverpool and North Wales's surgeons operating alongside each other in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd to further improve quality of care and team working. Subject to agreement by Liverpool, it is expected that this work will commence before the end of this month. In addition, work between BCUHB and Liverpool is developing to consider joint appointments and other work to ensure sustainability of services in North Wales.

3. Workforce and Clinical Leadership

A review of the clinical and operational workforce is underway and advertisements for consultant vascular surgeons and nurse specialists will be in place by 14th March 2022.

Agreement in principle has been reached for a nationally respected vascular surgeon to join the team to develop professional standards on a part-time basis and this role is expected to commence before 21st March 2022.

An Associate Medical Director has taken on temporary responsibility as clinical lead pending the appointment of a lead externally. The Health Board has received two expressions of interest for this role and is currently following due process with current employers to facilitate a strong appointment at pace.

The Executive Medical Director is working closely with regulators, including the General Medical Council (GMC), in terms of any future regulatory involvement that may be required.

The GMC is also working with the Health Board to provide professional standards training for the vascular team but also more widely across the clinical workforce. Two of these training sessions have already taken place and four more are planned before the end of March 2022.

4. Quality of Note Keeping and Consent

A rapid improvement cycle exercise has been introduced in all three acute sites, initially focussed on vascular note keeping and consent. The quality and completeness of clinical notes has already improved.

This weekly notes review commenced in February and will continue until the end of March when a wider audit of clinical notes, consent and Do Not Resuscitate (DNAR) orders will be adopted across the Health Board as part of the Clinical Audit Plan for 22/23. The learning from these audits, as well as from external reviews such as HIW's recent positive findings of clinical notes in our Emergency Departments, will contribute to ongoing improvements in clinical record keeping as well as development of the Electronic Patient Record (EPR).

Consent training has been identified and the first session took place on 4th March 2022 with a further workshop planned for 29th March 2022.

The Digital Health Record (DHR) commenced as a pilot in vascular on 25th February 2022, a key step in ensuring high quality clinical records in the longer term.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

5. Vascular Quality Dashboard

A beta Vascular Quality Dashboard went live on 24th February 2022, reflecting provision of service recommendations from the Vascular Society. This will evolve to include Patient Recorded Experience Measures (PREMS) as well as quality metrics. BCUHB has commenced discussions with South Wales' vascular networks to develop closer working on reporting of quality standards and an effective community of practice.

6. Clinical Pathways

Since the College review, vascular pathways have been adopted across the Health Board with the final pathways being agreed in February 2022, for the management of diabetic feet.

These pathways, reflecting national guidance have been adapted to the geography and composition of the clinical teams feeding into the three acute sites. They will now be monitored closely to ensure that both patient and professional experiences further develop the quality of those pathways.

7. Management of Clinical Networks Across North Wales for WAST and the Health Board

The Health Board is working closely with WAST to develop enhanced pathways to ensure timely transfer of patients for the more specialised services in North Wales and any concerns or exceptions are now highlighted and solutions identified between the two organisations.

8. Patient Helpline

A telephone helpline for patients concerned about their experience in vascular services, past or present, went live on 18th February 2022. In addition, the extensive media coverage has led to two patients now feeling able to bring issues to the Board's attention which are being investigated and the patients and families supported, for which the Board is hugely grateful. The extensive work with the media and with partners, including the Community Health Council who sit on the internal monthly Vascular Steering Group, is key to re-establishing trust in this important service by the people of North Wales.

I trust this brief summary appropriately highlights some of the key actions the Health Board is taking within the wider vascular improvement work.

I will, of course, provide a further update next month and would be happy to discuss any aspects of this letter when we meet later this week at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Yours sincerely

Mark Polin OBE QPM
Cadeirydd / Chairman