

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/03476/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

7 November 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 19 October regarding Petition P-05-849: access to diagnostic tests for suspected prostate cancer.

Patients in Wales should have access to investigations for cancer in line with clinical guidance and this should be delivered consistently across Wales. The introduction of new tests and procedures need to be fully understood and planned for by Health Boards. In terms of pre-biopsy mpMRI, evidence has emerged from at least one clinical trial that pre-biopsy mpMRI may have advantages over the current recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Care (NICE) for the investigation of suspected prostate cancer.

However, the issues are broader than whether or not mpMRI is conducted pre or post-biopsy. It is also about the standard of the test, the equipment specifications, the training requirement for the reporting and the potential to rule out the need for a biopsy in some patients. There will also be implications for other cancer and disease pathways if a significant element of demand shifts from histopathology to radiology, while there are already significant pressures on radiology, therefore any pathway changes must be planned for and managed.

My expectation is that Health Boards deliver high quality and consistent care by providing services in line with guidance from bodies such as NICE. As mentioned above, NICE does not currently recommend pre-biopsy mpMRI but it is undertaking a review of the guideline for prostate cancer diagnosis and management, which is due to be published in April 2019. Details on the scope and progress of this update can be found at:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10057/documents>

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Wales Urology Board has discussed this matter on a number of occasions in the past twelve months and at its last meeting agreed to establish a consensus building workshop to support health board planning in advance of the decision from NICE. This workshop is taking place on 12 November, with involvement from Prostate Cancer UK.

If NICE recommends pre-biopsy mpMRI then I will expect all Health Boards to amend their pathways accordingly. However, what the Welsh Government cannot do is make a decision on what is the most clinically appropriate pathway to investigate suspected prostate cancer. This must be the responsibility of Health Boards and clinical leaders, based on the evidence available. I expect there to be greater consistency in service provision after the NICE guidelines have been updated.

Thank you again for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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