

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/08331/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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3 December 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 30 October regarding Petition P-05-926 to provide a Chronic Fatigue Department in Wales.

The Welsh Government recognises the impact that chronic fatigue, often referred to as ME/CFS (myalgic encephalopathy / chronic fatigue syndrome), has on the lives of individuals and has established a national steering group to consider what further support can be provided and to share good practice. The group consists of representatives from health boards, service user representatives, third sector organisations, volunteer support groups and Welsh Government.

Health boards are responsible for providing services for those living with ME/CFS. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has a dedicated ME/CFS service. In the majority of other health boards, ME/CFS services are aligned with pain services. As an example, Powys Teaching Health Board runs a pain and fatigue management service. Health boards also have the option to utilise specialist centres for ME/CFS depending on their location. Clinicians in South Wales can for example refer to the Bath Centre for Fatigue Services. Clinicians are expected to follow the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance when caring for people and this does not necessarily require a specialist dedicated service. This treatment should be provided by the healthcare professionals with appropriate skills, wherever they are based.

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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 Welsh Government is currently working with NHS staff and service users on a number of areas of guidance relating to long term conditions. In May 2019 we published guidance for staff and patients relating to living with persistent pain, a common symptom of ME/CFS. The guidance can be accessed at the following link:

<https://gov.wales/people-experiencing-persistent-pain-guidance>. Guidance for arthritis and related conditions is also being developed and a consultation will be undertaken in the near future.

The ME/CFS steering group will reflect on both of these guidance documents and consider their relevance for patients within their remit.

In relation to the suggestion in the petition that “without a Chronic Fatigue department there can be no research”, this is not technically correct. It is possible that the existence of a specialist clinic in any disease area could potentially add to the visibility of the condition, and increase capability and experience that would help with the development of collaborative research. However, there are a number of Welsh Government research funding schemes to which researchers with an interest in ME would be eligible to apply.

With regards to Myers infusion, we expect the NHS to follow evidence based guidelines. We are not aware of any well-designed trials of high dose intravenous nutrient therapy, nor is there strong evidence to support its effectiveness in the management of chronic pain or associated conditions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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