

20 February 2024

Neurology Recall

In 2018, I submitted a subject access request to you [FOI 18622], requesting to know the number of blood patches performed over the last 10 years.

Following last years publication of the Neurology Inquiry Report, it was established that you had provided me with a response that excluded around 100 of those blood patch numbers, and that you had established the correct number of blood patches in 2017, and therefore knowingly provided me with inaccurate numbers.

1. Can you clarify the reason for providing me with inaccurate figures?

Belfast Trust did not knowingly provide inaccurate details regarding the number of blood patches in 2017. The information relating to the correct number of blood patches changed as the team continued to validate and review all available information and resources. Please be assured that as new information came to light this was shared with the Independent Neurology Inquiry (INI) team and information relating to this can be found within the body of their Report.

2. Please outline clearly why this decision was taken & by whom?

We can confirm that the Belfast Trust did not intentionally withhold information. Please refer to the response for Question 1.

3. How many of the excluded blood patch numbers that you withheld from me are deceased?

Belfast Trust did not knowingly withhold any information from you regarding the number of blood patches or the number of deceased patients. It is not possible to provide you with this detail at this time as given the passage of time it would require a manual trawl of all patient records to identify the cause of death of each patient and for some, this may not be available to the Belfast Trust.

4. Please can you provide me a copy of the correct figures, and include blood patches performed in any department, after 2018 to today's date?

Please see attachment

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Use of < 5 (less than five): We are unable to provide an exact figure - exempt from release under section 40(2) of the FOI Act - as this could make patients personally identifiable. Disclosure would constitute a breach of the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

- 5. In 2018, I asked you how many blood patch patients were deceased. Initially you replied that were none, then later admitted that there were 5. However, I've since learned that once again these numbers were incorrect. Please outline clearly how many blood patch patients from January 2015 to today's date are now deceased?**

The information requested is not collated centrally and an extensive trawl of patient notes would be required. We estimate that compliance with this request for information would exceed the appropriate costs limit. Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information 2000, the limit has been specified as £450 and represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information

It is also important to indicate that patients sadly die as a consequence of a variety of reasons.

- 6. Dr Watt performed a number of procedures, in addition to the blood patches, namely Plasma Exchanges, Therapeutic Lumbar Punctures and IVIG. Please provide a month on month, year on year breakdown of the number of these procedures, the department, (i.e. neuroscience, emergency care etc) for as far back as records allow to today's date.**

Please see attachment.

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- 7. Are any of Dr Watts procedures currently being used as treatment for vaccine injured/covid/long covid patients? Please detail.**

Awaiting clarification.