

National Spinal Injuries Centre

Service Users Committee Meeting

Thursday 9th February 2006

Attending: Moray Cook
Danny Turnball
Mike Mackenzie
Paul Smith

Apologies: Jackie Bailey
Emily Layden
Maria Freeman

There was no formal agenda for the meeting but a discussion took place on the following issues:

1. Concern was expressed by all committee members regarding the lack of progress being made in finding replacements for the surgeons Patrick Kluger and Isaac Nuseibeh. Of particular concern was the fact that it had been known by the NSIC management that these two key members of the NSIC team were to be leaving at this point and that there had been no appropriate forward planning to address the situation that could be seen by the committee.

Paul Smith informed the committee that he had had a meeting with Dr Tom Meagher prior to the Service Users committee meeting to discuss this subject. Paul had been assured by Tom that the NSIC is committed to ensuring that surgery continues to take place at the NSIC and would not be going down the route of acute care being done elsewhere while rehabilitation became the focus at the NSIC. Tom assured Paul that it was not a question of if Dr Kluger and Mr Nuseibeh would be replaced but rather when and how. There is a distinct shortage of spinal cord injury surgeons in the UK and even with the desire to appoint such there will undoubtedly be great difficulties in appointing to these posts. While the NSIC fully support the service users view that the surgeons should be spinal cord injury specialists, and are part of the NSIC's consultant team acting as consultants as well as surgeons, the NSIC are looking at the possibility of appointing a surgeon to the orthopedic team. This option was seen as beneficial in terms of the possibilities of providing full cover from the orthopedic team. Paul had urged Tom to take a message back to the spinal directorate that the service users would like to see consultant surgeons within the spinal injury centre.

Mike was particularly concerned about the increasing waiting list for plastic surgery for the repair of severe pressure sores. Paul had been assured by Tom that this is a short term problem and will be resolved in the near future.

Agreed, Dr Tom Meagher will be invited to attend the next meeting of the service users committee to provide an update on the position regarding surgery within the NSIC.

2. Concern was expressed about the rumors going round the NSIC that claimed service users were unhappy with the management team at the NSIC. It was unanimously agreed by the committee that while there had been things they would have liked to have seen done differently, the management team had listened to the views of service users and had done a good job in terms of turning around the centre. There had been a number of improvements such as cleanliness on the wards, and while there were still issues outstanding these were being looked at.

Agreed, Mike will write a letter of support on behalf of the service users committee which will be sent to the Chief Executive of the trust, Ruth Harrison, stating the committee's support for the management at the NSIC and to counter the rumor to the contrary. Mike will send a draft copy to Moray and then the agreed document will be sent out by Paul using SIA headed paper but from the entire service users committee which will be listed at the end of the letter.

3. A discussion took place regarding the NSIC Newsletter which was being sponsored by Stewarts Solicitors. The committee was pleased to see that two editions of the Newsletter had been produced but was concerned that neither had been sent out to NSIC service users, other than by being distributed on the wards and around the centre. It was agreed to bring up the subject of the mailing at the patients forum meeting which followed the service users committee meeting. Concern was expressed over a statement in the piece about the election of members to the service users committee. The statement in question stated that committee members would be required to stand down after three years of service. This would mean that after the first election of committee members there would be a period of stability for three years then the entire committee would be required to stand down and a new committee would have to be formed. This would not be good for continuity so it was agreed to ask the NSIC management to change this statement so as a third of the committee retired on rotation after three years of serving. This will be brought up later in the patients forum meeting.
4. The next service users committee meeting will take place on 13th April 2006 at 1pm.