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OPERATION ROCHESTER

BRIEFING NOTE

Following the conference of the 14th June I have consulted with a practising consultant concerning key elements of the report provided by Professor LIVESLEY.

The Consultant concerned is Dr MUNDY who is the consultant Geriatrician at Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

I briefed Dr Mundy on the general chronology of events immediately preceding Mrs Richards death and asked for his comments.

He expressed concerns in two areas:

1. The pre-prescription of Diamorphine, Hyoscine and Medazolam. Given that Mrs Richards was already taking Oramorph he considered it was not appropriate to pre-prescribe drugs of these types. He would have expected that there would have been a review of the patient's response to oral drugs before the administration of the more powerful drugs was commenced.

He did make the observation that there would be grounds to deliver the morphine based drugs, and the use of a syringe driver was not inappropriate, where it had been determined at a review that this was the most efficient way to afford pain relief. No such review process appears to have taken place in Mrs Richards case.

He also observed that the switch from Oramorph (a drug taken orally) to the morphine based drugs (to be delivered subcutaneously) should have been determined by reference to formulae provided by the drugs suppliers which indicates the relative quantities required to deliver relief where the objective was to relieve the patients pain. Professor LIVESLEY may be able to comment on this issue. There is no indication to my knowledge that the medical staff made use of such a formula.

2. On a more general point he expressed some concern that drugs were being delivered continuously via a syringe driver to a patient who did not have a clear terminal condition. His opinion was that there should be review processes that assess the adequacy of any drugs / treatment regime.

On a more general note, given the chronology of events as described, Dr Mundy asked whether or not Mrs Richards was suffering from any other condition which may have been significant i.e. breast cancer (his suggestion). He seemed surprised that no other condition was evident. I did not pursue this matter further – I was concerned not to lead him in any particular direction given his other comments.