

Complaints Department
Education Centre
St Mary's Hospital
Milton
Portsmouth PO3 6AD

Code A

21 August 2002

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Code A

Our ref. AB/CH/Code A/1062/98 (Please quote Our Ref on all correspondence)

Dear **Code A**

Thank you for your letter dated 18 August 2002. I would like to assure you that the Trust has taken all your concerns surrounding your Code A death very seriously.

A full investigation has been held of each of the points you have raised. The Ombudsman accepted this when he examined the matters you brought to his attention.

You have requested a complete detailed list of all samples taken from Code A body including tissue blocks and slides. Code A a previous Chief Executive, in his letters of 19 October 1998 and 9 November 1998, together with Code A letters of 5 September 2000 and 27 September 2000 addressed this issue. I will confirm the details for you.

At the post- mortem:

- Your Code A heart was retained so that it could be examined in considerable detail.
- A slice of tissue of less than a quarter of each of Code A lung's was taken
- Further small pieces of tissue , less than 1.5cmx1.5cmx4cm, were taken from other (unspecified) organs

The heart and lung tissue were placed in a container with formalin. The small pieces of tissue were placed in tissue processing cassettes and then into a container with formalin. Following usual procedures, both these containers were left in the Queen Alexandra Hospital Mortuary to be collected by the laboratory porters and transported to the Histopathology Laboratory. These containers were lost and never arrived at the laboratory. There are no glass slides or paraffin blocks because the two specimen containers were not received in the laboratory and were therefore not processed. None of the tissue mentioned has therefore been retained by the Trust.

A sample was also taken from the lower lobe of Code A left lung and this was sent separately for microbiology culture. This was processed and a scanty growth of Candida species was produced. This specimen has been destroyed and nothing retained.

Although I know it is extremely distressing for you, I have to confirm that no tissue is retained from your Code A post-mortem. I realise that the circumstances surrounding your Code A death, and the subsequent loss of Code A body tissues, must be extremely upsetting for you. However I feel that this Trust has investigated your concerns to the full extent possible and there are no further avenues of investigation that can be followed.

I am aware that, although you have previously received apologies from other staff members and myself for the tragic loss of your Code A heart and body tissue, it is difficult for you to accept the sincerity with which these sentiments are meant. Whilst I wish that it was otherwise, your Code A heart has been lost and I am unable to change this situation, and your question as to the whereabouts of Code A heart will always, sadly, remain unanswered.

I do believe that the Trust has done all that it can to address your concerns. I deeply regret the distress that has been caused to you and your family.

Yours sincerely

Alan Bedford
Chief Executive