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GRO-A

Our Ref:

GRO-A

July, 2006

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**Administration Directorate
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
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Dear

GRO-A

I have now completed my investigation into the issue which you raised in your letter dated 22 June, 2006 regarding the commencement of your treatment for hepatitis C. To address this concern I have sought the assistance of Dr Alexander, Consultant Hepatologist and Mr Apperley, Commissioning.

I note that Dr Alexander has sent you a personal letter in which he has expressed his concern at the lack of available treatment for you and his frustration that we have, as yet, been unable to commence you on medication. Mr Apperley has advised me of the current situation which I will summarise.

- During the period 2004-5 we had limited internal funding (90 patients) for hepatitis C drugs and the medication was allocated based on the patient's clinical priority and the length of stay on the waiting list.
- During the past two years the waiting list has increased and the Trust now has 140-160 patients waiting for treatment.
- In 2005-6 and 2006-7 Primary Care Trust (PCT) funding approval was and is required for Hepatitis C treatment with Pegylated Interferon.
- You have been assessed as suitable for treatment but had not been considered by your clinician as having the highest clinical urgency. Currently there are 10 urgent cases awaiting funding and you are second on the list of other patient.
- Applications for funding have been made by Mr Marshall, Head of Commissioning on behalf of the Trust on the basis of clinical priority and length of time on the waiting list as being fair criteria for access.
- The Trust is trying to expedite treatment to all Hepatitis C patients by an agreed business case.
- Your request for funding was sent to the PCT in June this year but as yet no response has been received by them. I am very sorry that there has been a delay in notifying your PCT.

I understand that you are a Cambridge City PCT patient. Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire PCT have 45 patients that were on the waiting list at the beginning of the year or have been added to the waiting list in 2006-7. So far only 5 patients have had their funding approved by the PCT all of which were deemed clinically urgent. The PCT has now proposed that the Trust continue to start new patients at the 2005-6 rate of 2.5 per month, with the clinicians deciding the order in which patients should be treated. This will apply until the Trust has submitted the business case to the Primary Care Trusts for treatment of Hepatitis C patients with Pegylated

Interferon. A business case was requested by the PCT at the end of June and will be submitted to their deadline of 31 July and discussed on 14 August. After the business case has been agreed with the Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trusts and Public Health Network then there should be agreed criteria available for which patients will be treated and when. The business plan is in urgent preparation.

I am extremely sorry that, having contracted Hepatitis C from contaminated blood products previously supplied by the Health Service, we have been unable to treat you. You have received a prompt diagnosis and disease management advice from the clinician and I acknowledge that it must be extremely distressing and frustrating that having recognised your need we have been unable to follow it up by offering you treatment promptly. As the local provider we can only work with the Primary Care Trust to obtain/request funding and the decision for funding currently rests with them.

Please be assured that we are working very hard to address this matter so that the patients involved have a satisfactory outcome and one which is not going to be delay their treatment much longer.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Hennessy
Complaints Manager