

16 May 2017

By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Ms Nicole D'Rozario
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3000

Dear Ms D'Rozario,

Re: Inquest into the Death of Esther Ng Kit Ching
Court Reference: COR 2012 004823

Thank you for your letter dated 8 February 2017 providing Eastern Health with the opportunity to respond to the recommendations made by Coroner White in his findings dated 7 February 2017.

In relation to those recommendations, Eastern Health responds as follows:

- 1. Recommendation that Eastern Health amend its policy to emphasise the dangerous aspects of allowing LDU patients to bring in items that may be used as ligatures and that Eastern Health institutes admission and periodic search policies.**

Eastern Health intends to amend its practice guideline headed, "Conducting Searches of consumers and their belongings in Inpatient Units (Mental Health Program)" (**Practice Guideline**) to require its staff to clearly communicate to patients on admission and as required during an admission to the LDU that items such as belts, cords and scarves etc. may be used by patients as ligatures and that for the safety of all patients, those items should not be provided by a patient or visitor to any other patient or left unattended in the common areas of the LDU.

In relation to Eastern Health's admission and periodic search policies, the Practice Guideline was revised in 2015 to provide that searches will be conducted:

- (a) At various times during an episode of patient care, including on admission, on returning from leave and before being transferred into intensive care or seclusion;
- (b) When a risk assessment identifies an, "imminent and apparent risk" to the patient or another person; and
- (c) When staff have a reasonable belief that a search may yield dangerous or inappropriate items.

Paragraph 4.14 of the current Practice Guideline further provides that any items found during a search that are considered clinically inappropriate should be removed from the patient.

2. Recommendation that Eastern Health engages an expert in psychiatric unit risk management analysis to undertake its regular ligature review audits.

Eastern Health is currently in the process of engaging an appropriately qualified expert to undertake regular ligature review audits of Eastern Health's inpatient mental health units.

That expert will be engaged by Eastern Health from outside the organisation.

3. Recommendation that Eastern Health nominate a designated person within each mental health unit to collect, preserve and provide safekeeping to any item that may be relevant to any investigation into a suspected incident of self-harm (and to notify Eastern Health's clinicians of such designation).

Eastern Health intends to incorporate the following paragraphs into the Practice Guideline:

"The ANUM of each Eastern Health inpatient unit will be responsible for collecting, preserving and providing safekeeping of all materials (including but not limited to inappropriate items) which are or may be relevant to any investigation into a suspected incident of self-harm.

The ANUM must document the collection and storage of such materials in the patient's CPF as soon as possible and at the latest before the end of his or her shift.

If any employee is in possession of any such item, he or she must immediately hand that item to the ANUM and record the full details of the collection of the item and its subsequent delivery to the ANUM in the patient's CPF."

4. Recommendation that Upton House nursing staff be counselled in relation to the importance of making clinical notes and completing clinical records.

In 2016, all Eastern Health clinicians were required to complete an online clinical documentation learning package.

The stated objective of the learning package was to ensure that Eastern Health's clinical documentation, "supports the provision of safe and effective care and is consistent with common law, legislative, ethical and current best practice requirements."

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9895 3269.

Yours sincerely,



Sue Allen
Chief Counsel
Eastern Health