

Ms Rachel Nicol
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria

Sent via e-mail: team12@courts.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Nicol

Finding with recommendations – Investigation into the death of Noah Souvatzis (COR 2021 007004)

Thank you for your letter 06 August 2024 related to Coroner Lorenz findings into the tragic death of young Noah Souvatzis. I was saddened by the events and would like to convey my condolences to Noah's family and especially to Ben and Stephanie on the loss of their much-loved son Noah.

Response to recommendation

Coroner Lorenz made the following recommendation directed to Safer Care Victoria:

That Safer Care for Kids consider incorporating a question to be asked by clinicians about parental and carer concerns into the ViCTOR chart as a routine vital sign with associated free text spaces to document these concerns.

Safer Care Victoria (SCV) accepts the recommendation and would like to take this opportunity to provide Her Honour with a status update. I am pleased to advise the Safer Care for Kids project has commenced actions to address the recommendation. We are testing changes to the ViCTOR chart to incorporate a proactive assessment of family and carers concern for deterioration of their child. This process will be initiated by clinicians throughout the observation, monitoring and recording process. A free text space is available within the ViCTOR chart to document concerns.

In order to support the implementation of these important changes, SCV is convening a pilot project that will explore the most effective system changes to:

- improve reliability of ViCTOR chart usage
- integrate a proactive assessment of family/carers concerns for deterioration within the ViCTOR chart
- improve reliability of timely and appropriate response to deterioration through use of the ViCTOR chart
- develop an audit tool and monitoring process to support statewide Quality and Safety oversight of ViCTOR chart use.

Appreciating the variation that exists within the Victorian health sector, the pilot aims to better understand how to operationalise this initiative across a variety of public and private health service contexts and settings with varying electronic capabilities. The Safer Care for Kids: ViCTOR pilot initiative will take place over nine months, commencing November 2024 and will establish a baseline understanding of the system and confidence in our ability to create system changes on a larger scale.

In the meantime, SCV is aiming to improve the reliability of ViCTOR chart usage across all health services caring for paediatric patients. This will be actioned through targeted communications directed to the health sector aiming to improve the reliability of the ViCTOR chart within its current format.

We thank Her Honour for highlighting this important issue. Should you have any queries, please contact Jodyanne See, Senior Project Officer for Coronial matters [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Ms Louise McKinlay

Chief Executive Officer

Safer Care Victoria

Date: 31 / 10/ 2024

Clozapine and gastrointestinal hypomotility

In 2022, the product information and consumer medicine information (CMI) for all clozapine products were updated to include a boxed warning on clozapine-induced gastrointestinal hypomotility. However, serious and fatal events associated with clozapine-induced constipation continue to be reported.

Situation

- Clozapine is an atypical antipsychotic medicine used for treatment-resistant schizophrenia.
- Due to its potent anticholinergic action, clozapine can cause gastrointestinal hypomotility, ranging from mild constipation (common) to severe complications such as intestinal obstruction, faecal impaction, megacolon, paralytic ileus and death if left undiagnosed and not treated promptly.
- The risk is further increased in patients who are:
 - Co-prescribed with other anticholinergic medicines and/or medicines that can cause constipation (e.g. opioids)
 - Taking higher doses of clozapine
 - Have a history of bowel disease or bowel surgery



Clinical recommendations and suggested actions

- Inform patients taking clozapine about potential common and rare side effects, including constipation.
- Screen patients for constipation before starting and during treatment with clozapine.
- Provide patients with guidance on how to prevent constipation, including dietary and lifestyle advice.
- Consider the use of prophylactic laxatives when starting clozapine in patients at high risk of constipation (e.g. older patients).
- Avoid the concurrent use of medicines that can cause constipation where possible.
- Use a bowel chart (electronic or paper) for patients and residents in hospital, residential care facilities, and where appropriate.
- Advise patients to seek medical attention immediately if they experience constipation or any sign of slowed bowel activity:
 - No bowel movements, less bowel movements than usual, or difficulty passing a stool
 - Nausea and/or vomiting
 - Bloating, tenderness or swelling of the abdomen
 - Stomach pains or spasms
- Treat suspected constipation promptly to prevent severe complications. Ensure local clozapine guidelines detail treatment options and an escalation pathway (i.e. when surgical intervention may be required).
- Report any suspected and confirmed cases of clozapine-induced gastrointestinal hypomotility at your organisation and/or directly to the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) (TGA).