

Agenda Item 14.2

Trust is among the first to introduce medical examiners to review hospital deaths

Lincolnshire hospitals are among the first in the region to appoint a team of medical examiners who will be able to review all hospital deaths.

The families of patients who die in hospital are being supported and given the opportunity to share any feedback with medical examiners at United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

A national network of medical examiners was recommended by several public inquiries and last year it was announced by government that a system of medical examiners will be introduced across the country from April next year.

Pilot schemes have shown how medical examiners are able to:

- improve the involvement of families and carers after a death
- improve the quality of completion of documentation
- ensure that there is an initial review of the case notes in all deaths to ensure there are no concerns regarding quality of care or potential for shared learning opportunities.
- Improve the quality of referrals to the coroner

ULHT has already appointed a lead medical examiner who will support a team of 10 medical examiners from across the Trust who will dedicate time alongside their existing clinical roles. Coming from a range of specialties such as cardiology, anaesthetics and intensive care, the medical examiners have a breadth of knowledge and experience that will be invaluable in this new role.

ULHT's Lead Medical Examiner is retired cardiac surgeon Dr Steve Griffin. He said: "This is a fledgling service at the moment, but it is great to be starting early and getting ahead with our plans. We are working very closely with the coroner's office and also our own bereavement centre teams who already do a fantastic job.

"We are already having conversations with the relatives and carers of all patients who die in hospital to talk through any medical questions, concerns and praise they may have. It is a much better experience for them and we will soon be able to review all deaths in our hospitals and offer this to all bereaved families."

A junior doctor involved in the patients care will meet with the medical examiner to discuss the case, agree the cause of death with the medical examiner, complete the paperwork and refer to the coroner when directed by the medical examiner.

Dr Griffin added: "As well as relatives having a medical person they can talk to, paperwork will be completed much quicker and more accurately. It also gives us a chance to think and reflect and look at each case to see if there are any lessons we can learn. Can we do anything better?"

The introduction of the medical examiner role to ULHT is an integral part of the clinical governance strategy and will ensure that the Trust is at the forefront in conforming to national guidance in learning from deaths.