



Guidance to Members in relation to medical notes and Evidence for the Inquiry into Contaminated Blood Products

Introduction

Many members have asked us what the next steps are and what they need to do if they want to be involved in the contaminated blood and blood products inquiry. We have put together below some advice on what to do with evidence you already hold and how to go about getting medical records.

If you have evidence you think might be of interest, please keep it safe. There is as yet no way to submit evidence to an inquiry. As soon as we know how this can be submitted we will share information on our website and through social media.

Accessing medical records

England and Wales

A request for your medical records should be made directly with the healthcare provider that provided the treatment, such as your GP surgery or hospital/haemophilia centre.

It is worth requesting both as some members have told us GP records have copies of letters that are no longer in their main hospital notes. This is known as a Subject Access Request (SAR), as set out by the Data Protection Act of 1998.

Many healthcare providers have SAR forms that you can complete and return by email or by post. Online access to your GP records is free of charge.

However, charges may apply if you wish to see the originals or get physical copies of your health records.

No fee is charged to see your records but if you wish to take a copy away you may be charged. The charge will vary, depending on how the information is stored. The maximum charges are:

- £10 for records that are only held electronically

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- up to £50 for those records that are not available in electronic form or only partially available in electronic form

By law, you're entitled to receive a response no later than 40 days after your application is received, your identity is checked and any relevant fee has been paid. You will then receive an appointment to see your records.

If you have asked to see a copy of your records, they should be written out in a form that you can understand. This means that abbreviations and complicated medical terms should be explained. If you still do not understand any part of the record, the health professional who is holding the record should explain it to you. You can also read the ICO's Subject Access code of practice guidance (PDF, 897kb) for more information.

After you have made your request in writing (this includes email) to the data controller at the NHS organisation where your records are held – for example, the hospital that treated you, or your GP surgery – you will receive an appointment to see your records. If you have asked to see a copy of your records, they should be written out in a way you can understand. This means that abbreviations and complicated medical terms should be explained. If you still don't understand any part of the record, the health professional who is holding the record should explain it to you.

If you want to view the health records of a deceased person, you can apply in writing to the record holder under the Access to Health Records Act (1990).

Accessing medical records in Scotland

It is similar to the above and you can apply in writing to the practice manager at your GP and records manager at hospital.

Accessing medical records in Northern Ireland

You can ask your GP for access to your records, for hospital notes the letter needs to go to your hospital's records manager.

Records may also be available from the National Haemophilia Database

To access this information you need to complete the form here

http://www.ukhcdo.org/docs/Applicationforaccesstohealthrecords_Patient.pdf

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