



Jillian Skinner
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 2 August 2016

ST VINCENT'S CHEMOTHERAPY FINAL REPORT

A comprehensive final report has found the chemotherapy for some patients with head and neck cancers provided by a St Vincent's Hospital oncologist was off-protocol and not supported by clinical evidence.

The report into Dr John Grygiel's off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy for people with head and neck cancers details a culture of conflict and mistrust that exists in the oncology department at St Vincent's Hospital.

The review - led by the state's Chief Cancer Officer Professor David Currow - found there was a failure by St Vincent's Hospital clinical staff to recognise and report the incidences of flat dose prescribing of carboplatin for 103 patients between 2006 and 2015.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner said today: "These patients and their families rightly feel let down. Every patient has the right to trust their doctor is abiding by protocols. We will strengthen clinical oversight to ensure no doctor works in isolation again."

Steps to reassure NSW cancer patients their treatment is sound include:

- The NSW Government will allocate \$6 million over three years to roll out new software to ensure chemotherapy prescribed in electronic prescribing systems is delivering evidence-based treatment. This will allow clinical practice to be monitored, with particular emphasis on any changes in the first doses of chemotherapy.
- All public cancer patients who have received treatment over the past five years will be reviewed. Chief Executives of Local Health Districts and Specialty Networks will be required to confirm in writing that patients are being treated in accordance with the appropriate protocols. Chief Executives will also be asked to confirm in writing that all patients are being provided with sufficient information to make informed decisions about their cancer therapies, which would entail their written informed consent. The Cancer Institute NSW will independently review these reports.
- The NSW Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) is continuing its investigation into Dr John Grygiel's clinical practice. If there are patients with concerns about their treatment, they should contact the HCCC.

NSW Health has accepted all of Professor Currow's recommendations and is implementing them. Additionally, NSW Health Secretary Elizabeth Koff has put St Vincent's Hospital Sydney management on notice, advising them their obligations in regard to funding from NSW Health, and their performance on the implementation of the recommendations, will be monitored closely.

Western NSW cancer patients treated by Dr Grygiel, identified in the interim report, are the subject of an ongoing stage two investigation, to be completed by September 2016.