November 2017

Dear Neil,

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE – PATIENT RECORDS

I'm responding to the Committee's request for further information on the digitisation of patient records within NHS Scotland, in particular in the context of the Care Inspectorate's report on its experiences with acute and primary care records.

I would hereby like to give an explanation of the situation with such patient records.

Primary Care Records

Electronic Patient Record systems have been in place in primary care nationwide in Scotland for many years for GP and dental practices as well as community pharmacies.

However, historic records created before the introduction of primary care IT systems in Scotland remain in most cases in their original paper form. Although they may be used in inspections, they are generally not needed as part of daily clinical practice for which the electronic record usually suffices.

Scanning of historical paper records has taken place in some instances but is not a national policy goal as it generally creates little additional functionality to paper. This is because information in such scanned historic records is not coded and searchable. Changing this on a national scale would not create enough added value in daily clinical practice for the amount of resource that would need to be invested.
Acute Care Records

Core electronic Patient Management Systems are in place in most acute settings in Scotland. The exceptions are again historic records for the same reasons as in primary care.

In addition, prescribing and medication records in many hospitals are still on paper. We have an existing commitment in the current eHealth Strategy for the roll-out of Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (HEPMA) systems across Scotland to address this gap in the electronic patient record for acute care. Implementation of this commitment is supported by dedicated national funding made available by the Scottish Government.

I hope this clarifies the situation for the Committee.

Best wishes,

SHONA ROBISON