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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg
University Health Board

Our Ref: PR/lmf

Date: 30th October 2014

ABMU Health Board
Headquarters
One Talbot Gateway, Seaway Parade,
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Mr William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Powell

I am writing in response to your recent letter received by me via email on 29th October 2014 attaching two earlier letters on the same issue.

Firstly I would like to apologise for not responding to your letter in January, and my delayed response to your letter in September. I will ensure that your letters are responded to in a timely manner in the future. Can you ensure that any letters from the committee requiring response are always sent to my office (as I acknowledge happened in this case) so that I can co-ordinate a response.

Secondly I would make the following comments on behalf of the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board on the specific issues raised in this petition.

As you are aware the wording of the petition is as follows:-

“Beth Margetson is one of our town’s residents whose life has been overshadowed by a dreadful disease we know as cancer and it will affect nearly 1 in 3 of us at some point during our lives. Many will survive yet others in advance stages of this disease like Beth are unable to gain access to the latest treatments that have not been approved by NICE although a pathway exists in England & Scotland to obtain treatment via a Cancer drug fund. Here in Wales no such fund exists yet each year over 74 million free prescriptions are issued in Wales at a cost of over £550 million to the NHS in Wales. We therefore

• Chairman/Cadeirydd: **Andrew Davies**

• Chief Executive/ Prif Weithredydd: **Paul Roberts**

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request that the Welsh Assembly Government introduce a nominal charge (e.g.£1.00) for prescriptions in order that a special Cancer drug fund be set up in Wales with the proceeds so that people like Beth and many hundreds of others like her at least have a chance that is being denied to them thus far unlike people in England or Scotland”.

We recognise that there is concern by some patients, clinicians and Cancer organisations about the arrangements for approving some cancer drugs in Wales. We understand that following the recent review of the Individual Patient Funding Request process that consideration is being given by the Welsh Government to a number of changes which would speed up the introduction of medicines which are considered likely to be supported by the evidence reviewed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Consideration is being given to widening the remit of the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG) to allow them to provide interim guidance on medicines on a case-by-case basis that are likely to be reviewed by NICE in the next twelve months. We also understand that the potential for the All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre being given the remit to develop an “interim commissioning process” to be used in very unusual cases where timescales might now allow for an interim appraisal by AWMSG. Consideration is also being given to how Health Boards might obtain consistent All Wales advice on the use by clinicians of medicines “off label” in certain unusual but evidence based circumstances.

This Health Board welcomes these proposals and believes that if adopted they would address many of the criticisms of the current system and would therefore support such measures (or similar ones) if adopted by Welsh Government.

In regard to the specific issues of a Cancer Drug Fund and proposals to fund it through prescription charges we regard these as being essentially policy matters for Welsh Government to consider. As you are aware there are differing views within the main Welsh political parties on this matter. As a statutory public body we would therefore not wish to comment directly.

I hope that these comments are useful to you and your committee.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely



PAUL ROBERTS
CHIEF EXECUTIVES

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