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Mr Franck David
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions
Committee
Tower 4, TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Holyrood
EH99 1SP

28 February 2008

Dear Franck

Response to petition PE1056

SIGN published its first guideline on Prophylaxis of Venous Thromboembolism (SIGN 2) in 1995. This was revised in 2002 (SIGN 62). In addition, some elements of the diagnosis and management of DVT are covered in another SIGN guideline (SIGN 36 on Antithrombotic Therapy, 1999).

These guidelines form the basis of the majority of protocols in use in NHSScotland, as demonstrated by the Stocktake report published recently. This Stocktake report and a model patient information leaflet was sent to Chief Executives of all NHS Boards on 25 January. The accompanying letter from the Chief Medical Officer and the Chairman of NHS QIS asked all NHS Boards to address the requirement for written policies for prevention and management of DVT as a matter of urgency, based on SIGN Guidelines 36 and 62. A response from each NHS Board detailing the actions taken must be produced by 28 March 2008.

SIGN is now reviewing SIGN 62 on prophylaxis and additionally using this opportunity to incorporate recommendations on diagnosis and management of DVT and pulmonary embolism into a single document. The new guideline development group is chaired by Professor Mike Greaves of Aberdeen University and will include representatives from all the relevant clinical specialties, as well as patient and lay representatives. The first meeting of the group will take place in March 2008 and consultation on the draft guideline will take place during 2009.

The normal time taken to produce a SIGN guideline is 26 months. This is in line with the time taken by guideline developers across the world, including NICE in England and Wales. Every effort is made to reduce the time taken, but it is important that the recommendations are derived in a systematic fashion, incorporating the evidence available and the views of those who need to implement them, as well as the competing demands of a programme of 20+ guidelines under development at any one time. SIGN continues to actively seek ways in which we can streamline the guideline development process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D R Steel', written on a light-colored background.

David R Steel
Chief Executive