

22 July 2015

Chief Executives and Medical Directors
NHS Trusts undertaking Specialised Spinal Surgery

Dear Colleague

British Spine Registry

The British Spine Registry (BSR) is the National Register approved by NHS England and NICE for Specialised Spinal Surgery. As such, its use by spinal surgeons and their employing NHS Trusts to record specialised spinal surgery is mandated by the NHSE Standard Contract for Complex Spinal Surgery. Demonstration of adequate Audit and Governance processes is a part of the CQC inspections - the Francis Report was very critical of a failure to participate in National Audits.

Despite all Trusts declaring that they meet the requirements of the contract with none in derogation, the British Scoliosis Society has recently compared HES data with data in the BSR and found that compliance for spinal deformity surgery is at present poor; only one Trust recorded 100%, only four Trusts recorded over 50% and many Trusts recorded 0%. Compliance with other specialised spinal surgery is also poor, with only 8% of Trusts undertaking specialised spinal surgery entering any significant data. I have made NHS England aware of this apparent contract breach.

The British Spine Registry is web-based and free to use by spinal surgeons (orthopaedic and neurosurgical) who are members of one of the spinal surgery professional associations. It complies with all NHS data protection rules and is registered with the ICO. Data input requires patient consent and local Caldicott approval. Some centres use Spine Tango as an entry vehicle.

The process of accurate data collection does take time. A minimum dataset has been agreed by the CRG in specialised spinal surgery. Surgeons will require a small SPA time allocation. The BSR Committee and the CRG working with centres achieving high compliance have estimated an administrative cost of 1 WTE administrative staff (Band 3/4) per 1,000 spinal operations per year. With this resource we would anticipate 80% data capture in the first year.

As you are aware, spinal surgery is one of the significant pressure points on the RTT 18 week target. Entry of non-specialised spinal surgery onto the BSR, while not mandatory, will provide vastly improved audit and governance and support the spinal networks recommended by the Spinal Task Force. Pilot spinal networks are now running under the initiative of Sir Bruce Keogh and aim to address this issue among others. NHS England has just announced funding for an implementation project for the spinal networks which will commence this autumn.

I would be grateful if you would address compliance with the BSR within your Trust, in particular in consideration of the resources required. Compliance is also a requirement of surgeon revalidation and would be grateful if you could pass this on to the responsible officer in your Trust.

Yours sincerely

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