Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS
NHS Trust

Complaint case study for publication on Trust website April 2015:

Mrs F contacted PALS in March 2015 having been told that she had developed a tumour at the site of a previous hip replacement.

Mrs F underwent a metal on metal hip replacement operation 12 years ago. In 2015, Mrs F was informed that annual blood tests should have been performed following the surgery, which did not happen. Mrs F has since been diagnosed with a tumour at the site of her original surgery and believes this is a result of poor follow-up care.

Our findings

This complaint was investigated through the formal complaints process by the Matron and the Clinical Director for Orthopaedics. Following investigation, the complaint was upheld.

They advised that the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued a medical devices alert on 22 April 2010 and following extensive consultation, the MHRA issued updated management recommendations in 2012 relating to patient follow-up dependent on the type of metal on metal implant. These revised recommendations highlighted that Mrs F should have had annual follow-up for the life of her implant and a blood test for metal ion tests with subsequent blood tests dependent on those results.

It was the responsibility of all Orthopaedic Departments and surgeons to action these recommendations and review their records. Although patient lists were compiled and reviewed, as Mrs F's hip was revised in April 2004, her case was overlooked and for this the Trust apologised. At the time of Mrs F's surgery, it was not mandatory for organisations to maintain a National Joint Registry and as such, there were no formal departmental records for all surgeries completed. Assurance was offered that a register has been in place since October 2004 with all joint surgeries recorded on a National Database by the Trust. This would prevent any other patient having this same expereince now.

Rregrettably, the risks of metal debris were not known when Mrs F attended clinic with hip symptoms between 2003 and 2007 which is why the blood tests and MRI scan, which are now done routinely, were not requested.