

Court ref: COR 2016 006193  
SCV ref: CC 2018-03

Colleen Bebbington  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
Southbank VIC 3000

Dear Colleen,

**Re: Investigation into the death of Kathryn Maree Jelbart**

Thank you for your letter dated 11 January 2018 accompanying Coroner John Olle's Finding Without Inquest into the death of Kathy Jelbart and for granting an extension for this response. I apologise for the delay in formally replying. As we have previously communicated there was a delay in your letter reaching me.

I note that the Coroner's findings include a recommendation relevant to Safer Care Victoria that:

*TPMT genotyping for the common alleles should be mandatory for patients prior to the commencement of thiopurine containing medications.*

Using knowledge about an individual's genotype to inform specific drug treatment and dosage (or not) is employed for an increasing number of indications and treatments. Indeed there is a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) reimbursement for this test, reflecting this growing field.


However, it is the considered view of SCV that mandatory testing of thiopurine methyltransferase (TMPT) genotyping ahead of thiopurine administration is not justified.

About 11% of the population have reduced thiopurine methyltransferase (TPMT) activity and 0.3% of the population had a true deficiency of TPMT. There are 28 allele variants that may be tested for, but of these it is likely that only a few are clinically relevant. Of course, the cost of testing increases with every allele screened.

Our concerns are that the current evidence does not support routine use of genetic testing in preference to simple routine monitoring of blood counts. This alone would detect the problem in an individual without the expense of testing 99.7% of the treated population unnecessarily.

For these reasons, the Coroner's recommendation is under consideration by Safer Care Victoria. We are aware that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is reviewing the evidence for the role for TPMT testing prior to the use of thiopurine medications in Australia. A decision by the TGA pending this review is likely to be available in twelve months. Our preference would be to await the outcome of the TGA decision.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Professor Euan Wallace**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Safer Care Victoria

8.5.2018