

9 July 2020

The Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir

Re: Investigation into the death of Jessica Higgins
Court ref: COR 2017 002579

I write in response to your letter of 16 April 2020, addressed to Dr Meredith Craigie, former FPM Dean.

The Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) notes that in this matter the Coroner has made the following recommendation, at clause 143:

That the Faculty of Pain Medicine of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists include in their forthcoming guidelines on ketamine infusion specific guidance on post-discharge planning that addresses how to communicate clinical decision-making surrounding changes in dosage of opioid medication and what information will be required before making any such changes.

In the process of developing these guidelines to which the Coroner referred, it has become clear that the appropriate stance of the FPM in this context is in fact to publish a Position Statement on the use of ketamine in the treatment of patients with chronic non-cancer pain. In this the FPM's perspective is broader than that of a set of guidelines (a "how to" document), in favour of a more detailed articulation of the ethical issues and evidence base involved in this issue. However, this document will not have been finalised within the three-month time-frame, as required.

This letter therefore is to advise that the FPM's response to the Coroner's recommendation is: (b) An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented. That alternative is production of a broader Position Statement that will comprise "the development of new or additional policy" [as per option 4(b) of the Guidelines for Responding to Coroners' Recommendation(s)]. This Statement will address the "specific guidance" as recommended by the Coroner above.

The FPM expects this Position Statement to be completed by the end of August and will advise your office accordingly.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor Michael Vagg
FPM Dean

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