

2 November 2022

Ms N D'Rozario  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

By email: [cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ms D'Rozario

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

I write in response to your letter of 30 August 2022.

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 recommendations:

**Recommendation 170**

I recommend that the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Faculty of Pain Medicine reiterate to their members the importance of considering buprenorphine in chronic pain management in appropriate cases.

**Recommendation 171**

Furthermore, it is important that practitioners remain conscious of the need to consider the risks associated with concurrent medication prescribing in vulnerable patients, and that frequent reviews are undertaken in a face-to-face setting, to assess patients for signs of sedation or other adverse symptoms.

**Recommendation 172**

I recommend that the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Faculty of Pain Medicine reiterate the risks associated with patients who are prescribed multiple and concurrent medications with sedative properties, and that frequent reviews of patients ought to be undertaken in face-to-face setting to assess for adverse signs and symptoms.

**Recommendation 175**

I recommend that the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Faculty of Pain Medicine reiterate to their members the importance of practitioners ensuring that all interactions with their patients, especially those with multiple providers, are documented in clear, written form in the patient's medical record, and that all patients are instructed in clear, written terms regarding their medication usage and doses to avoid potential adverse outcomes.

The FPM position statement [\*PS12\(PM\) Position statement on the use of ketamine in the management of chronic non-cancer pain\*](#) and its accompanying [\*PS12\(PM\) BP Position statement\*](#)

[on the use of ketamine in the management of chronic non-cancer pain Background paper](#) were developed in response to this case.

This document offers guidance for the use of ketamine in CNCP based on the literature and expert consensus, to inform the judgement of practitioners and to promote safety and quality for their patients. The position statement sets out the ethical considerations, evidence for benefit and harm and safety considerations.

To reinforce the expectations of professional practise as articulated in the above recommendations to our members, the Director of Professional Affairs, FPM will prepare an article for our membership *Bulletin* magazine to be published in 2023.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Davis', written over a faint circular watermark or background.

Dr Kieran Davis  
FPM Dean