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Sent via e-mail.



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## Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratios (HSMR)

Dear Ed

Thanks to Catherine for contacting me on 19<sup>th</sup> November in relation to a complaint about the November 13<sup>th</sup> release of the ISD publication Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratios (HSMR). I have discussed this with Scott Heald, Head of Profession in ISD, which produces the majority of health statistics in Scotland and this letter outlines the steps we have taken to address your concerns.

### Scottish Government Press Release

Catherine's e-mail noted various points, primarily that the Scottish Government press release on the HSMR publication fell short on the plausible reasons for the fall in hospital mortality and questioned whether it was plausible to conclude that Scottish Government interventions (via the Scottish Patient Safety Programme) has "saved lives".

This is a similar issue to an earlier complaint on HSMR back in May 2018. Whilst we took action at that point to address those concerns, in this instance I am content that there has been a genuine oversight in the procedures for drafting press releases. In particular that in this instance statisticians were not sighted on the final draft of the press release which was created at a very late stage in the process.

To address this and other points raised in Catherine's e-mail we have met with policy and communications officials and agreed that we will implement the following steps:

To further assure the analytical robustness of Scottish Government press statements that accompany statistical releases, we will tighten up processes whilst press releases are being drafted, so that an active response is sought from analytical services before issuing. This will ensure that an analyst can comment on any final version of lines or a press release.

Furthermore, in relation to the specific publication, we will

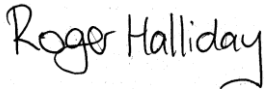
- add caveats around attribution and crude mortality rates (using the ISD text from the HSMR publication) to the press release (background note) as a default for all future HSMR press releases

- We will meet with policy officials to discuss the wording of future HSMR releases, particularly in relation to the interpretation of attribution and the extent to which the impact of clinical or operational interventions can be cited.

I am content in this case that there was not a deliberate intention to mislead and there has been a genuine oversight at a late stage in our processes for drafting press releases.

I am happy to discuss any of this if required and am copying this response to Scott Heald, Head of Profession in ISD.

Yours sincerely



Roger Halliday  
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