

News story

Independent investigation finds no individuals bullied into changing cancer target data at Colchester Hospital

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An independent investigation into allegations of bullying and intimidation at Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust has found that there was no evidence of an instruction to manipulate or inappropriately change data on cancer treatment.



The 10 month investigation, led by Professor Pat Troop and Carole Taylor-Brown, was commissioned by the trust under instruction from the health regulator Monitor who oversaw the process. This was after allegations were made that staff were bullied into inappropriately changing data which the regulator uses to hold the trust to account for the amount of time patients wait for treatment.

The main issue under investigation was whether changes had been made to the 'decision to treat' – the date when a clinician decides that the patient should be monitored to establish if treatment for the cancer is needed.

The report found that:

- staff became concerned after the introduction of a new validation process for cancer data in 2011; the Associate-Director of Cancer Services did not adequately explain the reasons behind his decisions to change data which in some cases were difficult to explain and not understood by colleagues
- there is no evidence that data issues were widely known in the trust and specifically there is no evidence that clinicians were aware of these concerns
- the examination of staff complaints was mismanaged by the then Director of Finance who failed to ensure the investigation he set up involved clinicians
- the primary individuals involved in the management of this issue no longer work at the trust; the report's authors consider it would not be appropriate for any disciplinary action to be taken against the 2 managers still employed by the trust

Adam Cayley, Regional Director at Monitor said:

Today's report should bring a very difficult chapter in the history of this trust to a close. It is reassuring to find that there is no evidence of staff being bullied into changing cancer data, but it is even clearer that there were serious managerial failures at the trust.

The new management team at the hospital is already delivering improvements for patients – a process we expect to see continue.