

By e-mail: murray.benham@achcew.org.uk

Murray Benham

Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales

Earlsmead House

30 Drayton Park

London N5 1PB

[28th] May 2002

Dear Mr Benham

CASUALTY WATCH MAY 2002

I am writing to express our deep concern about the nature of the announcement ACHCEW have made following the May 2002 'Casualty Watch' and that you chose to ignore the Trust's point of view made to you with regard to the 82 and 76 year old female patients listed at St Peter's Hospital A&E.

This survey is merely a snapshot and not representative of either the time most people have to wait nor the excellent service people receive in the Accident & Emergency Department at St. Peter's Hospital. It is difficult to see how this survey helps when all A&E Departments experience fluctuations in demand. A survey over a longer period of time or a comparison with previous 'Casualty Watch' statistics would have been more representative.

Your use of the term 'waiting' implies an absence or lack of care or active treatment for the duration of this time rather than being a measure of 'time elapsed' from arrival to the point of survey. Seventy per cent of people attending our A&E are seen and discharged or transferred within four hours. This will be even better from Autumn 2002 when our £1.5m Medical Assessment Unit is in place. Since December 2001 Ashford & St. Peter's Hospitals has consistently met the Department of Health criteria for no trolley waits over 12 hours.

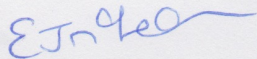
We are always concerned when patients have to wait longer than necessary but at all times the patients you identify were given the care they needed, on a bed – not a trolley. We do agree that the 66 year old female patient identified in your snapshot had to wait before transfer to the bedded observation ward but only a relatively short time after the doctor decided she should be admitted.

As we pointed out to you last week we believe that ACHCEW are incorrect to show two other patients – the 82 and 76 year old females. These patients

were transferred shortly after arriving in A&E to our bedded observation ward. This area is excluded from the main department and is staffed and equipped as a ward.

In a region where we find it very difficult to recruit staff ACHCEW have simply perpetuated this by adding to our problems rather than helping to solve them. This is no help to either staff, patients or the public.

Yours sincerely



LIZ McLEAN
Director of Performance

Cc Paul Mitchell, NW Surrey CHC
Local MPs
Local Council Chief Executives
Local PCT Chief Executives
Trust Management Board and Non-Executive Directors
Claire O'Brien, Head of Admissions
Andy Hollebon, Communications Manager