



SCOTLAND PATIENTS ASSOCIATION

The Clerk
Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh

7 January 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: petition 1076

Scotland Patients Association has worked with patients and their relatives for over 25 years. We are at present restructuring to form a registered charity.

It is very clear to us that patients and their relatives are not satisfied with the NHS complaints procedure and many of its outcomes. When proceeding to the Scottish Public Ombudsman Services (SPSO), in the event that the NHS complaints system has proved to be unsatisfactory, many feel no better pleased with the outcome of SPSO.

Both systems cost a great deal of time, effort, and anguish at a time when a patient may still be receiving treatment and relatives may be grieving over the death of a loved one. If complaints could be dealt with at the time, or as near to the time when first raised, it is possible that more satisfactory outcomes for patients and NHS staff could be achieved with fewer cases needing to be seen by the SPSO.

Many causes for complaints are due to poor communication and staff attitudes and it may well be very difficult to prove by evidence as written in patient notes. Perhaps only litigation in court with witnesses, bound under oath, may it be possible to prove a patient's perception of events.

In many successful businesses the customer is "always right" when in truth it may not be so, but at least they are given the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps there is room for this concept in the NHS regarding the approach of management to complaints.

Yours sincerely

Jean Turner

Dr Jean Turner MB ChB DA
Executive Director
Scotland Patients Association

SCOTLAND PATIENTS ASSOCIATION (the only patients association in Scotland founded 1982) reg.
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