



APPENDIX 3

Mr Jan Filochowski
CEO, Watford General Hospital
Vicarage Road
Watford. WD18 0HB

Dear Mr Filochowski

I am writing this letter to express my extreme gratitude for what your superb staff have done for me over the past couple of weeks. I shall outline what was done and thank as best I can all those staff and departments who made my recovery thus far possible. I managed to make note of many names but sadly I know that many were missed. This is not to say they were not as good as those whose names I got as this is not the case.

I woke on Tuesday 16th June feeling extremely unwell. I was taken down to Hemel Hempstead urgent care who were concerned at my condition and transferred me to Watford. I fainted in the ambulance briefly and collapsed completely when I got out. I was rushed to AAU who put me on drips and I recovered consciousness. I was immediately taken for a gastroscopy as a major bleed into the stomach was suspected. It was confirmed that there was a major bleed from a "mass" in my stomach. I was taken up to Cassio ward and my blood pressure monitored hourly all Tuesday evening and all Wednesday. Over the following few days I was put on line drips, blood transfusions and drugs to stop the bleed. On the Wednesday I was better if a bit pale and on Thursday 18th I had another gastroscopy so they could examine the lump and take some biopsies. I also had an X-ray and a CT scan which showed that whatever it was it did not seem to have spread. Over the Thursday and Friday the infusions of blood and fluids continued and by Saturday I was feeling well enough to walk about again. Unfortunately on Saturday lunch time I fainted on the way back from the loo again. Nurses and doctors in droves came running. I was carried back to bed, examined in detail. It was because my haemoglobin levels were still low.

Monday came and the results of the biopsy showed I had a gastrointestinal stromal tumour (GIST). The treatment was going to be a complete gastrectomy which was not the best news ever. This was planned for Thursday 25th June. Monday to Wednesday were dark days indeed but the nursing staff were absolutely fabulous. I was well fed to get ready for the operation. I signed all the papers on Wednesday evening and on Thursday at 11 am I was taken off to theatre accompanied by one of the trainee nurses from Cassio ward. I awoke on Thursday evening in the Intensive Therapy Unit. Due to

the morphine drips it was not until Friday that I registered the news that the operation had not only been a success but when they "got in" the tumour was not as large as they thought so they only had to perform a partial gastrectomy using keyhole surgery and only removed about 30% of my stomach. Had it been the full gastrectomy it would have meant a large incision as well. I recovered over Friday and Saturday and was transferred to Langley ward on Sunday evening. There I saw pain nurses, physiotherapists and dieticians. My side room was needed so on Wednesday 1st July was taken to Ridge ward for one night before being discharged yesterday.

I cannot fault the staff. They were ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC -- every last one of them. However I would like to express thanks as follows. If I have spelled names incorrectly my profound apologies!

(Senior Consultant) and his surgical team including who excised the lump.

Dr the anaesthetist and his team who knocked me out. I did have a very bad experience many years ago when I had my appendix removed as I reacted badly to a muscle relaxant but this time all went 100% perfectly.

Dr (Endoscopist) and his team who diagnosed the problem.

Dr and all the other doctors others who looked after me throughout my stay.

Abdul and all the other cleaners who cleaned the wards continuously and changed the water twice a day. Without them the rest of the team could not have done their jobs!

the dietician who visited on several occasions to ensure I ate the right stuff after surgery. Fortunately as I retain most of my stomach I will make a more or less full recovery. I am sure she will soon be a mum (you might check first!) so I wish her all the best.

The physiotherapist who got me back on my feet after the operation. Sadly I do not have her name.

The pain nurse who visited daily after the operation to check that my pain was under control. It was so by Monday am I was off morphine and by Tuesday am off pain killers all together. Again I did not get her name.

The pharmacists who got me what I needed when I needed it.

The blood transfusion service. I had 15 units. Without it I rather suspect I would not have made it.

Steamplicity. The food was really rather good. The menu was extensive. The food was always hot and really very tasty indeed, especially the sausage and mash! I have had worse in restaurants -- trust me! Only the tomato soup could have tasted a bit more of tomato.

from the chaplaincy who came around twice to make sure I was OK. Just a listener but it did help.

Lastly of course, the fantastic nurses across the wards. They were all superb. Here are those I managed to get the names off. Some will be staff nurses; some will be trainees and some sisters etc. Those I missed I apologise for not getting their names.

She was an agency nurse on duty the day I got the results of the biopsy. She was lovely.

(Langley ward),

(ITU).

All of them were superb but the three that I shall never ever forget were student nurses on Cassio ward.

(Cassio ward) who was so lovely, kind and always there instantly if I needed something. She looked after bay two while I was there most days.

(Cassio ward). Again a wonderful nurse on bay 2, she accompanied me to the theatre which meant an immense amount to me. She also stayed and watched the operation - I was asked for my permission first - again it was nice think that she was there just before Dr switched out the lights!

She was there when the news of the lump and the full gastrectomy was given and remained for a long time afterwards as I was upset at that point. Until I left for the op, she always popped in even if she was on one of the other bays (was on my bay) to see how I was. She is about to graduate and was appointed a staff nurse on Cassio ward from late July. The sister again I did not have her name - made a superb choice.

These three nurses and all the others across ITU, Langley and Ridge made a huge difference to my stay and recovery and I will never be able to express fully my gratitude for what they did.

I would like all the above to be communicated to all those concerned right from the cleaner up to Mr

I will be visiting the wards next week once I have recuperated sufficiently with large boxes of chocolates. I understand that I will not be permitted to actually visit ITU but hopefully the box can be sterilised and delivered!

I will be making a donation to the hospital via the trust offices in Hemel Hempstead. I leave it you to decide what to do with it.

I shall also contact the patient voluntary services people. I do work so time will be limited but I would certainly be more than willing to come in and visit any future patients who find themselves in a similar position, if just to prove that recovery is eminently possible with the support of the staff in Watford Hospital.

It just remains now for me to say one last huge "THANK YOU" to all the staff at Watford General Hospital who did such a fantastic job. I was treated with the utmost respect. I was kept informed at all times. The problem was diagnosed and fixed, and while I may still need a bit of follow up from Mount Vernon next week, you got the job done and stuck to the charter to the letter. I can never repay what was done and I will never ever forget you all.

The NHS, only ever, seems to be in the news when things go wrong but for me they went right. I did talk to several other patients and they all had exactly the same opinion incidentally. Feel free to use any appropriate parts of the text above to prove to anyone that the NHS can and do get it right the vast majority of the time and at no cost to the patient – I dread to think how much what I had done would have cost but it will certainly be vastly more than I could afford!

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely



Julian Cooke.

Patient H0956551