

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

10th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
14 June 2023

PE2016: Raise awareness of Thrombosis in Scotland

Petitioner	Gordon McPherson
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the risk factors, signs and symptoms of Thrombosis.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2016

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 3 April 2023.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 9 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.
6. A submission has been provided by the petitioner. This is included at **Annexe D**.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE2016: Raise awareness of Thrombosis in Scotland

Petitioner

Gordon McPherson

Date Lodged:

03/04/23

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the risk factors, signs and symptoms of Thrombosis.

Previous action

I have sent emails requesting meetings to discuss the situation with the Scottish Government between 2011 and 2023 which have been denied. The Scottish Government stated that as awareness was raised in 2011, they have no intention of raising awareness in the foreseeable future.

The MSPs I have spoken to include Anas Sarwar MSP, Jackie Baillie MSP, Douglas Ross MSP, Miles Briggs MSP, Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Natalie Don MSP. I have asked for and received assistance from BBC, STV, Daily Record, Glasgow Herald, Scotsman, Scottish Sun, Sunday Scottish Express and Sunday Post.

Background information

Our daughter died of an undiagnosed and therefore untreated DVT (Thrombosis) in 2003. Since then, I have campaigned to raise awareness and been involved as a Layperson in the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) Guidelines 122 and 129 along with the National Institute for Healthcare Excellence (NICE) VTE2 Guideline.

I am currently the World Ambassador for World Thrombosis Day 2022 which is part of The International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis which is a worldwide organisation.

Thrombosis kills approximately 11,400 people per annum in Scotland which is approximately 1 in every 4 deaths recorded (figures quoted are via Freedom of Information requests to the Scottish Government and via Health Ministers FOI).

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in white on a dark purple background.The logo for The Information Centre, featuring the text 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in white on a dark blue background.

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2016](#): Raise awareness of Thrombosis in Scotland, lodged by Gordon McPherson

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the risk factors, signs and symptoms of Thrombosis

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[Through Freedom of Information requests](#)¹, the petitioner has ascertained that thrombosis kills approximately 11,400 people every year in Scotland, which he says is approximately one in every four deaths recorded. However, in its response National Records for Scotland (NRS) provided clarification and explanation of the way causes and contributory factors are detailed when deaths are recorded, and included the range of conditions related to Deep Venous Thrombosis:

“DVT (Deep Venous Thrombosis) on its own is an unlikely cause of death, generally becoming life threatening when embolism occurs, usually to the lung. Pulmonary embolism is usually due to deep venous thrombosis” (NRS FOI response).

The petitioner believes that there is not enough awareness of the condition, its associated risks, or its signs and symptoms.

The petitioner mentions his involvement as a layperson in the development of clinical guidelines: the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) Guidelines [122](#) (2010, updated 2014) and [129](#) (2013)

¹ FOI reference: [202100240802](#) Date received: 16 September 2021 Date responded: 12 October 2021

along with the National Institute for Healthcare Excellence ([NICE](#)) [NG 89 Guideline](#) - Volume 1. NICE NG 89 Guideline - [Volume 2](#).

A [new SIGN guideline has been proposed](#) on the topic.

Thrombosis

Thromboses can develop in either veins or arteries and are clots of blood that form. In [arterial thrombosis](#) the blockage can prevent blood reaching vital organs.

According to NHS Inform:

“Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that develops within a deep vein in the body, usually in the leg.

[Blood clots](#) that develop in a vein are also known as venous thrombosis.

DVT usually occurs in a deep leg vein, a larger vein that runs through the muscles of the calf and the thigh. It can also occur in the pelvis or abdomen.

It can cause pain and swelling in the leg and may lead to complications such as pulmonary embolism.

DVT and pulmonary embolism together are known as venous thromboembolism (VTE).”

According to NHS Inform, a pulmonary embolism:

“is the most serious complication of DVT. It happens when a piece of [blood clot](#) (DVT) breaks off and travels through your bloodstream to your lungs, where it blocks one of the blood vessels. In severe cases this can be fatal.

If the clot is small, it might not cause any symptoms. If it's medium-sized, it can cause chest pain and [breathing difficulties](#). A large clot can cause the lungs to collapse, resulting in [heart failure](#), which can be fatal.

About one in 10 people with an untreated DVT develops a severe pulmonary embolism.”

The risk of developing DVT can be reduced in **some** cases with lifestyle changes such as exercising more, stopping smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and eating a more healthy diet.

Cancer and heart disease can increase the risk of developing DVT.

Testing for DVT can be done using [the D-dimer test](#). This test could be indicated when someone has symptoms of a disease or condition that causes [acute](#) and/or [chronic](#) inappropriate blood clot formation such as: DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis), PE (Pulmonary Embolism), or [DIC \(Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation\)](#), and to monitor the progress and treatment of DIC and other thrombotic conditions.

Public awareness including research

There have been a [number of studies over the past two decades, and more recently](#), that have considered the extent of public awareness of thrombosis.

One study, carried out in 2015 with 800 participants from a range of countries, including the UK, concluded that:

“On a global level, public awareness about thrombosis overall, and VTE in particular, is low. Campaigns to increase public awareness about VTE are needed to reduce the burden from this largely preventable thrombotic disorder.”

[National Thrombosis Week runs from 1-7 May 2023](#) and is a part of an ongoing public awareness raising campaign, organised by Thrombosis UK.

Anne Jepson
Senior Researcher
21 April 2023

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 2 May 2023

PE2016/A: Raise awareness of Thrombosis in Scotland

Thank you for your correspondence on 3 April 2023 to Craig McGill, the Committee liaison officer, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the risk factors, signs and symptoms of thrombosis in relation to Petition PE2016. I am responding as Deputy Director for the Planning and Quality Division, which has responsibility for public awareness campaigns related to patient safety.

In 2021, which is the most recent year for which we have data available, the National Records of Scotland data show that there were **380** deaths in Scotland from blood clots – deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism or venous thromboembolism. This means that one of these three conditions was listed as an underlying cause of death on the death certificate.

There were a total of **1,925** deaths where blood clots were mentioned on the death certificate:

- 380 deaths where blood clots were noted as an underlying cause.
- 1,545 deaths where blood clots were mentioned as a contributory cause.

The Scottish Government receives many requests to run public awareness campaigns on different issues and conditions. In recent years we have run major health campaigns on sepsis, out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, lung cancer, organ donation, finding the right care and flu vaccination, in addition to a number of campaigns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Owing to the range of important topics for health awareness campaigns that affect the people of Scotland, it is important that we carefully prioritise the issues to which funding and staff resource are allocated, and we continually assess the potential need for these with the close input of clinicians. After careful consideration, and in light of the fact that we have already provided updated material to clinicians

and revised the guidance available to the general public on NHS Inform on thrombosis, we do not consider that this is the right time for a major public awareness campaign on the condition.

The Scottish Government health social media account regularly releases routine health awareness messaging through social media, particularly highlighting the information and guidance that is available on NHS Inform. There is now a commitment to include thrombosis awareness in this package of activity, and this work is scheduled to take place later this year.

Annexe D

Petitioner submission of 2 May 2023

PE2016/B: Raise awareness of Thrombosis in Scotland

I would like to make this submission for the Committee's consideration in response to the response given by the then Health Minister, Humza Yousaf now First Minister. Namely his response to written Question [S6W-07943](#).

It is not the first time the Scottish Government has quoted one set of figures when there are other figures which reflect the case I put forward regarding deaths in Scotland where Thrombosis in all its forms are considered.

The figures I use in my petition are the result of Freedom of Information requests or responses to Written Questions raised on my behalf in Parliament.