

**Follow-up after elevated diabetes test result  
16HDC01215, 14 December 2017**

*Locum general practitioner ~ General practice ~  
Diabetes ~ Follow-up of test results ~ Right 4(1)*

A woman presented to a locum general practitioner (GP). During the consultation a laboratory form was provided for routine blood tests, which included a HbA1c test. The tests were carried out later that day, and the HbA1c results were elevated, which raised the possibility of a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. The laboratory results form stated that to confirm the result, the HbA1c test needed to be repeated in three months' time.

The following day, the GP saw and noted the HbA1c result, and the "task" of reporting the results to the patient was noted as having been "completed". The GP printed a template results letter and saved it electronically in the patient's clinical notes. The saved electronic letter had not been amended to remove the options that did not apply to the patient, and did not include any typed advice or instructions. It is not known whether the GP made amendments to the letter and these were not saved and whether or not the letter was in fact sent to the patient. The patient did not receive any information about her test results or the need to repeat the test. In addition, the GP did not enter a follow-up reminder into the system to repeat the test in three months' time.

The usual practice at the medical centre was that doctors would add a "task" in the patient's task list on Medtech if they needed to follow up a patient's abnormal result and that patients were advised of their results by letter. The "task" would remain until the doctor marked the "task" as having been completed. Usually the action taken would also be recorded by the doctor.

The medical centre has since changed the process of how patients are advised of their results. Telephoning and text messaging the patient are used as the first method of contact, and a letter is sent only if those options are not available. If a letter is used, the system now requires that an electronic entry is made and saved in the system, with the changes that have been made to the template reflecting the particular patient's circumstances and giving a record of what was sent to the patient. The change in process means that a blank template letter cannot be saved against a patient on the system.

**Findings**

It was held that the GP's clinical management of the woman's elevated diabetes test results was deficient and, accordingly, the doctor was found to have breached Right 4(1). An adverse comment was also made regarding the woman not being informed of her test result.