



# Temple Street Hospital Reports



Avril Scally reviews the recent report from Children's Health Ireland (CHI) collating the findings and recommendations from two clinical reviews into spinal surgery for patients with Spina Bifida at Temple Street Hospital

## Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to:

- Outline the rationale as to why patients' clinical reviews were undertaken including establishing if there were issues with existing spinal surgery services for patients with Spina Bifida;
- Collate and detail the findings from the reviews; and
- Develop a CHI Spinal Surgery Programme Implementation Plan.

## Background

In July and September 2022, two serious post-operative surgical incidents in spinal surgery were reported in CHI at Temple Street. CHI commissioned serious incident investigations into these two incidents. Between September and November 2022, concerns about spinal surgery outcomes were also raised by members of the Spina Bifida Multi-Disciplinary Team ("MDT") to their Clinical Director and to the CHI Chief Medical Officer.

As a result of these incidents and the concerns raised, both an internal clinical review and a separate external clinical review were carried out.

## Details of the Reviews

An internal clinical review of surgical outcomes for spinal surgery in CHI at Temple Street was completed in May 2023 to look objectively at the frequency and severity of surgical complications, and gross indicators of outcomes in patients with Spina Bifida who have undergone complex spinal surgery at Temple Street between 2018 and 2022.

Given the technical and specialist nature of the surgery involved and to bring clinical independence to the matter, the CHI Executive decided that an external clinical review be commissioned, to be undertaken by an independent international external review team. This would be of benefit in exploring the concerns being raised and identify any actions required to improve Spina Bifida spinal surgery services and outcomes. This external clinical review and Spinal Surgery Programme assessment commenced in March 2023. The findings and recommendations of the external peer review are fully incorporated into the CHI Report into Spinal Surgery for Patients with Spina Bifida in CHI at Temple Street.

A review and summary of internationally published papers on post-operative surgical complications for a specific spinal surgery procedure, Kyphectomy, was used to provide a comparative basis for the outcome

data in CHI's internal clinical review of spinal surgery outcomes between 2018 and 2022.

## Findings from the Reviews

It is universally acknowledged that complicated spinal surgery in patients with complex underlying conditions, as noted in this group of patients with Spina Bifida, has levels and types of risks associated with it due to the significant underlying condition of the patients and the complex surgery involved. The reviews' findings specifically relating to post-operative complications support a number of the concerns raised by some of the Spina Bifida MDT members on post-operative complications.

## Key Failings

The key failings can be identified as follows:

1. Unplanned return to surgery
2. Infections
3. Metal work complications

## Analysis of Key Failings

- The analysis of the 16 case files showed that 13 of the 16 patients required further unplanned surgery. One of these patients who had multiple procedures unfortunately died.
- The internal analysis showed that the overall infection rate for these 16 cases was 74% based on microbiology and clinical findings, while the overall rate of wound complication requiring further surgery was 75%.
- 56% of the cases had mechanical complications that required the removal of metal work.

## Conclusion

The report does not provide an explanation for the high complication rates. However, the report does set out numerous "best practices" and recommendations. Is it possible that these best practices were not carried out and that is what caused these major complications?

It has been announced that a further external review will be conducted by a UK expert to address the wider issues raised. It is of key importance that this further review serves a purpose and gives unambiguous clarity on the outstanding concerns of patients, their families and the wider public.

In summary, it is evident that there have been clear failings in the patients' care. Specialised remedial surgery, if necessary, will be absolutely paramount to their needs. ☐