Dear [Name],

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

I refer to your e-mail dated 6 June 2015, requesting:

“I would therefore appreciate any information on the experimental procedure Chemonucleolysis, that you might be able to provide me with.”

I can now respond as follows:

I would therefore appreciate any information on the experimental procedure Chemonucleolysis, that you might be able to provide me with.

NHS Grampian can advise that Chemonucleolysis was widely used to treat acute disc prolapses’ in many countries. It was very successful for the intended purpose. It dissolves the disc nucleus as the chymodidctin is a proteolytic enzyme. It gained a reputation in certain areas for less success as it was used for chronic calcified disc prolapses and stenosis, which it does not work for. Repeat use was associated with a low risk of anaphylactic reaction to the enzyme. This was avoided in Aberdeen by sending out a pack of medication to take pre-admission. The drug was bought by bigger and bigger companies and the licence was not renewed. To get a new licence in the UK was felt to be too expensive as it was only being used in a few centres.

Orthopaedic Consultant Mr Wardlaw, as he was then, was the pioneer for such treatment and had several surgeons and pain specialists trained. He was disappointed to lose this valuable treatment tool and had worked with various companies to try to re-establish a synthetic version of the drug in the UK market but he retired before realising this ambition. He carried out many procedures over twenty years and has published the long term results in peer reviewed journals as well as presenting his work at national and international spinal meetings.

The procedure had been in regular clinical use for over a decade by 1994.

References to Professor Wardlaw's published work on the subject can be found below:
Prospective randomized trial of chemonucleolysis compared with surgery for soft disc herniation with 1-year, intermediate, and long-term outcome: part I: the clinical outcome.
Wardlaw D1, Rithchie IK, Sabboubeh AF, Vavdha M, Eastmond CJ.

Prospective randomized trial of chemonucleolysis compared with surgery for soft disc herniation with 1-year, intermediate, and long-term outcome: part II: the radiological outcome.
Wardlaw D1, Rithchie IK, Sabboubeh AF, Vavdha M, Downing M, Eastmond CJ.

Under section 20 (1) of the Act, if you are dissatisfied with the way NHS Grampian has dealt with your request, you have a right to request a review of our actions and decisions in relation to your request, and you have a right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

A request for review must be made within 40 working days and should, in the first instance, be in writing to: Directorate of Corporate Communications, Ashgrove House, Foresterhill, Aberdeen, AB25 2ZN or by email to grampian@nhs.net

Requests for appeal should be made in writing to: Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS
Telephone: 01334 464610, Fax: 01334 464611
E-mail: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

Yours sincerely

Chris Morrice
Information Governance Manager
NHS Grampian