

Submission
No 115

**INQUIRY INTO OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
THE NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern regarding The Northern Beaches Hospital.

My mother was admitted via ambulance to the hospital in May 2019. The emergency department and treatment she received there was faultless, however this changed as soon as she was admitted to the public ward as a private patient. When she told staff, she was a private patient they said they'd move her to a nicer room-in the public hospital. It was more than a week before she was moved to the private hospital where she would be seen every day by her consultant, a Geriatrician, not twice a week as in the public ward (the consultant told us this.)

In the public hospital nursing staff were often agency nurses some of whom had poor English skills and at times could not understand what was being said to them, the medical care was less than satisfactory and on one occasion my mother was left Nil By Mouth for a whole day without IV fluids. When I spoke to the staff that evening, I was told she was Nil by Mouth because they were waiting for an X-ray to be taken. I told them that the X-ray had been done earlier in the day. I was then told they had to wait for the results. I explained that results would be unlikely to be forthcoming in the evening and that my mother was dehydrated, and medical staff needed to be called. There were also unnecessary procedures done on my mother without the curtains being fully drawn. On another occasion staff had come in to give treatment and my mother had told them that they needed to look at the charts as the doctor had stopped that particular treatment. My mother was seen by many many junior doctors in the public ward and there seemed to be little consistency of care and treatment.

After being transferred to the private ward, it was noted that all staff had good English skills and the nurses became familiar faces. However, at times the nursing staff could not read the medication charts or notes and my mother ended up telling staff to phone the pharmacy as they would know what drugs had previously been dispensed. This was the day after the medication had been ordered in the morning but delayed until the late afternoon as the hospital did not have the medication ordered. My mother wrote down what she was supposed to have and would tell the staff over the next day or so as they had no idea. I was present when this occurred. My mother was admitted under a general physician for severe back pain and then had a bowel obstruction and needed to be seen by a surgeon with speciality in the area for the latter issue. My mother was in there for a week before the family stepped in to get a colorectal consultant as her condition was not improving and she was becoming further unwell. The junior doctor was informed of our intervention on a Friday evening and he told me he would communicate this with the general physician. It was not done; the Geriatrician was very unhappy when she was told on the following Monday and stated that she should have been informed over the weekend. A CT scan in week 2 of her admission revealed a gynaecological issue which was explained as "highly suspicious" and would need surgery, no referral was given to her to see another relevant specialist. I was present when the geriatric physician asked my mother if she wanted any further treatment or investigations for the very suspicious mass on her ovary!

The family then decided my mother needed to be transferred as soon as possible to another hospital. The bowel blockage was unresolved, and the colorectal consultant there did not want to do any other treatment except give her lots of laxatives. Part of the treatment was to drink 2 litres of laxative a day. As my mother had to drink this amount she asked if they had a measuring jug as the staff were pouring the laxative into the water jug on her table. I was present when the staff said they had no measuring jug and that they were only available on the surgical wards! My mother also needed a gynaecological consultation. To sort out the "highly suspicious" lesion on her ovary. This was never done at The Northern Beaches Hospital. After 3 weeks she was transferred to The Mater Hospital. This was delayed because it was general practice to screen all patients being transferred from hospital to hospital for MRSA. This would take 48 hrs. Northern

Beaches Hospital should have known this and the transfer and admission to the other hospital which was ready on the Tuesday of the 3rd week was not possible until the Saturday. The transfer was then organised for 2 pm. I told my mother to stay in her bed and refuse to move until they transport arrived as I had seen an elderly man waiting for hours firstly standing then sitting on a chair in the corridor for a transfer a few days before. My mother was picked up at 7 pm and was transferred by 2 unqualified staff. They told my mother they were 2nd year students they had not yet finished their qualifications. This is unacceptable.

The meals at the Northern Beaches Hospital were not good either; unappetising or unpalatable. When my mother arrived at the Mater Hospital, the nursing and medical care was excellent. She saw another colorectal surgeon and oncology gynaecologist. She was told that the treatment at The Northern Beaches was not appropriate and she was reassured that she did not have ovarian cancer as was inferred at The Northern Beaches Hospital. Her bowel obstruction was resolved within a week and she was discharged.

I would never recommend sending anyone to The Northern Breaches Hospital. It is clearly not well staffed, run or yet finished as there were extensive repairs or installations being done in the corridors of the ward by electricians on ladders. Communication between staff, both nursing and medical was lacking and in my view dangerous. My mother said that if she ever needed to go to hospital again, she'd never go there.