

**Submission  
No 227**

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

**Name:** Mrs Noreen Rogers and Eric Rogers

**Date Received:** 27 July 2019

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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

My husband Eric is 91 years and 8 months old. He has Kidney disease Stage 5 (eGFR 10). We consulted a Urologist when Eric found that urinating was becoming difficult because he could not pee very well, and it took a lot of effort to do a very small amount of urine. Urologist advised to collect urine for 3 days and fill up form and report back. The next appointment, was 3 weeks away. However, suddenly the urine stopped altogether. Eric had not been able to pee for more than 6 hours – the time was 8.30 am. on 22nd May. I immediately telephoned Urologist's office for advice. Advised to see our GP right away and then go straight to nearest Hospital, i.e. being the new Northern Beaches.

We already have two of our Medical advisors based there and have been there once but not to the Emergency Department. I found it very awkward and difficult to find a space outside the Emergency Department to take my husband inside to the Triage Desk immediately.

We quickly went to our (Dee Why) GP who was very surprised at my husband's condition as by this time he was in great pain. She called an Ambulance immediately who, unfortunately, happened to be diverted elsewhere, not in Sydney. They did not know where Dee Why was. GP trying hard to get the Ambulance to come as quickly as possible. They asked if my husband had a heart condition. When told no he did not - (she explained what the condition was), which was also very urgent to get a Catheter in to my husband immediately, so that the urine could be released and the pain subside. It would also not cause Eric the agony he was in and the Bladder would not get damaged.

GP was told by Ambulance staff "we cannot get to you quickly and certainly not before ½ hour". GP frustrated and asked me if I could drive Eric. I immediately agreed as she said it was imperative that I got to the Emergency and to avoid any delay. She told me to go whilst she started writing an urgent Fax to the Emergency Department at Northern Beaches Hospital to appraise them of Eric's various health conditions and his full background as they needed to have this, and so that he didn't have to wait because the situation was critical.

I rushed to the new Hospital with my husband in agony, and I kept asking him to breathe deeply to put up with the pain. I was so happy to have arrived at the Emergency Department but I found it so very difficult to find a convenient spot where I could park and take my husband into Emergency. There were no empty spaces available for me to park and get him near enough to the Emergency Door. So I had to stop my car about 50 meters away, near to a car park with a Gate at the back, which appeared to not be parking for me, while I figured out how to get my husband to the Emergency. There were a few Ambulances parked nearby with the Drivers but not one of the drivers attempted to help me get my now doubled -up -with- pain- husband to Emergency. My husband is tall and I am very small. He was breathing very hard. I was distraught.

Suddenly someone hooted the horn of their car frantically and started shouting at me loudly which unnerved me further. It was a woman who had parked near me. She continued blowing her horn and shouting loudly to me but I could not hear her as I was trying to concentrate on my poor husband. I don't know who she was but she was very rude and disruptive. I found it very unnerving. She may have been hospital staff, I don't know. She saw my dilemma but made no attempt to help me and continued shouting and tooting her horn. I signed to her that I would return quickly and continued to walk and pull my husband to the Emergency door. I was forced to leave him at the door and get back to my car and the woman.

I then noticed that in my desperate effort to get my husband into Emergency, I had not realised that both doors of my car were wide open because my husband was in such agony and I was very scared and desperate to get him into Emergency. He kept saying that his abdomen was so hard that it felt it would explode. This may be possibly why the woman was making such a fuss - the open car doors - she obviously did not understand or care of my dilemma, and my desperate dash to the Emergency Door. She made no attempt to help me.

I got back into my car and looked for a place to park near the door of Emergency so that I could join my husband but there was not a single vacant space. What to do? this meant there were not enough parking spaces for such an important place as Emergency. I kept looking but there just were no spaces free. I was so very upset and frustrated because I could not now accompany my husband, and there was no one else in sight to help me. I would never ever dream of not accompanying my husband into Emergency so that I could help Staff with their questions.

Now I had no alternative but to drive to the multi storey car park. This was totally unacceptable as I knew my husband was in so much pain and needing me, and I dreaded what was happening to him. There were no spaces on the lower levels and I had to drive up to the 4th floor, then try to find the lift to go down and I ran all the way to Emergency. I am 80 years old. I could not see my husband in the Triage waiting room so I went to the Reception desk and asked where my husband was as he urgently needed a Catheter put in. Strange, but the lady told me she did not know where he was! I explained that I had rushed from my GP who had sent a Fax immediately because my husband needed a Catheter put in right away. I begged her to inform staff that my husband was in absolute agony and he was complaining that he felt his stomach was about to burst as it was so hard. The time would be about 15-20 minutes since he had entered Triage. She asked me to sit down in Triage area and wait. I could not think of anything except the welfare of my husband. I asked her if she had received my GP's Fax describing what was wrong with my husband and giving a detailed account of the many health problems Eric had, so that they would know everything about him and how to treat him.

The Receptionist said she did not know where my husband was and she was adamant they had definitely not received any Fax. I was shocked. (I later found out that my husband had already told them that he had Prostate Cancer and that the Prostate was enlarged and that he had very little kidney function and our GP had written all that in her Fax so that he would not have wait in Triage and could they find this Fax). If I had been with my husband in Triage, I could have told them all this and more, so that they knew of all the medical problems my husband had. He was told by Triage that the area where the Fax Machine was, was elsewhere and took no notice of him.

I knew that the Fax was there as our GP is very good and very proactive and helpful. (Apparently my husband had also asked if they had received the Fax and they said "Triage don't go looking for letters as the Fax machine is located somewhere else!" Suddenly a kind gentleman who was also waiting, tapped me on my shoulder and said "I think perhaps your husband is in here" and pointed me to the Triage entrance. I immediately entered the Triage room where I did find my poor husband doubled -up with agony and an unusually red face, and looking absolutely distraught and looking very confused as the Nurse was still asking him questions. I asked her to please send him away to get a Catheter put in, before any further damage to him, as this was imperative and asked her 'could she not see the agony on my poor husband's face. Please, Please help him.' Then the lady receptionist I had seen before who said she did not know where my husband was, came in and asked me to go with her down the passage telling me at the same time that I needed to give her information about my husband. I

said it was all in the Fax which had just been sent by our GP. I begged her to let me see my husband but she refused and told me to wait in the waiting room while she fetched papers for me to fill up.

I was totally distraught by now. She insisted that they had 'protocol' and I would have to fill in the form straightaway and was very unhelpful. I asked her if I could please do the "information-gathering" in a few minutes as I needed to be with my husband to comfort him. My husband is old and I had been forced into such a horrible situation as to let him enter Emergency alone because of the difficulty in finding a spot to park and the delay in driving to the multi storey car park.

I have never in my life had to abandon anyone at the door of an Emergency Department for them to enter alone and yet here I was being forced into such an awful situation with my poor husband in agony because there was no one to talk to or ask to help me or take my husband inside.

Finally, was allowed to go to my husband but no one told me where he was or which Bed no. he was in. I had to find him myself. This Emergency situation was quite unacceptable because my husband had been forced to wait approximately 30 mins. in the Triage area to "follow hospital protocol", when this was indeed such a genuine Emergency. They had also not found the urgent Fax sent by my GP, Dr. Caroline Tezjan in Dee Why. It appeared they had no intention of finding it. I was so worried what they would do to him as they did not have any of his background which would have helped staff deal with my husband's problems.

Thank God he was sitting up and looking so very relieved. He said it was such a relief to see me and how worried he had been and he told me that now that the urine was flowing again that his stomach no longer felt it was going to burst. If hospital staff had had taken notice of the Fax, they would have known immediately how delicate the situation was with my husband. He cannot have any Anaesthetic. He does have a metal band on his wrist stating some of his health issues. I don't know if the staff looked at this. My husband told me that the Dr. putting in the Catheter had found it pretty difficult to get past the Prostate and he had had to push very hard because of the resistance and he had to break through the Prostate which made the Prostate bleed a lot and it had been very uncomfortable while he pushed. I was so upset to see so much blood in the Catheter bag. The Prostate still bleeds regularly from time to time ever since that day. We try to wash the blood out by Eric having a lot of water to drink, but it is not pleasant.

I have never seen a Catheter before and did not understand where the bleeding was coming from. I was told that because the Prostate was in the way, they had had to push hard to get it in. So, if the Triage nurses had bothered to find the Fax which our GP had diligently sent quickly, they would have been much better informed instead of "going in cold" right through the Prostate. I asked staff why there was so much blood in the bag and was told 'it was probably due to piercing the Prostate. They assured me all was well, as this sort of thing does happen. I was not happy. What else had happened?

While I was sitting in the Ward with my husband, the Fax from our GP was quietly put on the table beside my husband! Had staff appraised themselves of my husband's health issues BEFORE putting in the Catheter, they would have had time to take other measures instead going in "blind" whilst inserting the Catheter. By disturbing and damaging the Prostate Cancer on the 22nd May 2019 we realise what else has taken place. 1. The blood that had been flowing in the bladder has been circulating in my husband's body taking with it cancer cells. We have never had a bleed from the Prostate Cancer like this before except after the operation to put the Catheter in. 2. A few days after the Catheter Insertion, my husband suddenly had a pain in his

Pubic area and day by day it got worse as the pain went right down to his Left knee. This caused quite a restriction in his movement in the groin area and he was unable to walk easily as he had been doing before, and the pain in the area got worse. He had to use a stick because of pain and restriction.

We went to our GP to ask her what to do. She examined him and ordered an Ultra Sound of the area and also an X-ray which revealed he had an enlarged Hernia. By now my husband was not able to walk freely or very far. He was in pain most of the time. He did not ever have this before. Our GP told us to inform my husband's Nephrologist that there was now the added issue of a Hernia which she believed should be dealt with sooner, rather than later.

Our Nephrologist was not happy with this situation as my husband has Stage V Kidney disease already, and she has been very careful of what can and can't be done with my husband's medical conditions. The Kidneys were much more important than the Prostate Cancer and as there had not been obvious signs previously, of any Cancer issues, so everyone had been concentrating on looking after the Kidneys. Now we have a much worse situation which has arisen since the Catheter was put in – we have a Hernia which cannot be pushed back in, as it needs an Operation to put mesh in to hold the Hernia in place. My husband is totally unable to have a General Anaesthetic for any operation because of his very poor Kidney function, i.e. eGFR 10 and our Urologist was totally against Operating on Eric because of him not being able to tolerate Anaesthesia. This sudden Hernia has given us tremendous stress as we did not know what to do. Your Specialists would know the danger if the Hernia is not operated on quickly because the Hernia was not small. The bowel could get strangulated which obviously could be very dangerous and we didn't think an Operation to repair the Hernia in an Emergency situation would be possible to do as there is a lot more to it, if the bowel is involved and if we left the repair any longer. Our Nephrologist recommended a lady Surgeon she knows, who would be able to do the Hernia operation under Local Anaesthetic by Nerve Blocking. As soon as we were able to, we went ahead with repairing the Hernia.

It has been a very worrying time for my husband and me and all our Family since the 22nd May 2019, having to face these difficult situations. We also have the added cost of the Hernia Operation at the San Hospital which happened after the Catheter was put in. We did not wish to have the Hernia operated on at the Northern Beaches Hospital.

My husband was seen by the Surgeon who was happy to do the Operation and she operated on my husband on Thursday 18th July 2019 at the SAN HOSPITAL. Eric spent the night there and I stayed in the Hospital too, to be with him. The Hernia Surgeon saw my husband the same day in the evening and then the following morning before he was discharged on Friday 19th July midmorning. The Surgeon was happy with everything and Eric is recuperating. But he has had a lot of pain. We never expected anything as serious as this would ever happen.

I, our daughters and their families and ourselves have had a very, very stressful time ever since the insertion of a Catheter on 22nd May 2019. We have been distraught to say the least. We also have the added worry of the Prostate Cancer having spread as recent Tests have shown. Cancer Specialists now have to find a solution to the spreading of the Prostate Cancer. We are so very disappointed in what has happened to our very dear husband, father and Grandfather.

Unfortunately, we have been so incredibly busy that it has not been possible to find the time to write this letter earlier to Parliament. We just realised that this email letter has to be received by tomorrow Sunday 28 July 2019 and we have had to rush this to you. My husband has suffered a lot with pain after the Operation of the Hernia. As he is over 90 it has been very difficult for him. Recovery will take about 6 weeks and we are nursing him at home.

With kind regards

ERIC AND NOREEN ROGERS