

Submission
No 187

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Mrs Sheryl Rowlands
Date Received: 2 December 2020

Partially
Confidential

Thank you for the NSW Health Inquiry looking into regional and rural health access.

I have submitted my Mother's patient story after my Mother was admitted to the Broken Hill Hospital for day surgery for a cataract removal and subsequently died in hospital a few weeks later.

Today this still haunts me and it will everyday for the rest of my life.

The sad part is if I hadn't have been working at the hospital as a Nurse at this time I would probably never have known what really happened.

Story Taker Name	
Story Taker Position	EOC and Projects Coordinator
Ward/Department Story Collected in	ICU and Medical Ward
Story Teller (age, gender, patient, carer)	Carer /daughter Sheryl
Length of session	1hour and post session follow up
Date	Submitted for Patient Based Working Party - May 2016

This carer story was collected on the recommendation from the Director Clinical Governance and is now presented to the Board with consent from the carer that her story would serve as a timely reminder of the importance to include carers in all dimensions of patient care.

Tell me about your experience being a carer for your mother who was a patient at the Broken Hill Health Service

My mother was admitted to the Broken Hill Hospital on Monday 19 January 2015 for day surgery to have a cataract removed which eventually led to her death 17 days later. After all this time I am still trying to understand what happened to my mother. The following is an account of events as they unfolded which I wrote in my diary. I am an enrolled nurse and this is my story from a daughter and carer perspective.

Monday 19th January 2015

My mother was admitted to day surgery for a cataract removal of her right eye. On admission she was in sinus rhythm, but tachycardic, so it was decided that she was to be admitted to ICU overnight for observation as a precautionary measure.

Tuesday 20th January 2015

When I went to visit her on that morning she was a little distressed as she remained tachycardic and had to remain in hospital for another day. As she was hooked up to a monitor she found it extremely hard to sit up because every time she did, she would disconnect one of the leads which would then set off the monitor alarms. When I came back later in the evening she was lying there trying to eat her dinner and she was finding it hard to swallow to try and get it down. The staff was busy and as she was in a back room they were unaware that she was having difficulties with her meals.

Wednesday 21st January 2015

When I went to visit my mother before I commenced work I found her lying in bed still hooked up to the monitor, only now she had a drip up, an oxygen mask on and she had a catheter which had been inserted during the night.

Being very distressed finding her this way I immediately went to the nurse's station and said that mum didn't look too good. I was given no explanation ... only that she had had a 'rough night'. It was only days later that I was told that she had a MET (medical emergency) through the night. None of the family was notified, if so we would have been there immediately.

Mid-morning my nephew had gone to visit her and later I called my brothers and told them to come to the hospital. At around lunch time we were spoken to by a doctor who explained to us that mum

had aspirated during the night and now she had 80% aspiration pneumonia in her right lung. We were then asked if she was for resuscitation.

When we went back to see her, there was another doctor asking my mum if she wanted to be resuscitated? My brother almost fainted. The doctor then left and my mother was asking me what was wrong with her and why they were asking about resuscitation. We were all in shock, upset and didn't know what to say to her. Mum told the doctor that she did want to be resuscitated, so she was moved out of the single room where she could be observed more closely. The treatment then began for the pneumonia later in the afternoon.

Thursday 22nd January 2015

Mum remained in ICU.

Friday 23rd January 2015

Mum remained in ICU.

Saturday 24th January 2015

Mum had a good day, she seemed to be improving.

Sunday 25th January 2015

Mum had a nasogastric tube inserted. We could hear her scream outside... It was so upsetting to us. As it was being inserted she went into atrial fibrillation. It was then realised that she had had the wrong size tube inserted (Salem sump). It was bigger than the one that she should have had inserted. As it had caused her so much distress it was decided that they would keep it in.

Mum was transferred to the Medical ward later in the afternoon. That night she seemed much better, laughing and joking, we didn't think it would be long before she would come home.

Monday 26th January 2015 - Public Holiday

I was due to fly to Adelaide the following morning for a doctor's appointment for myself, and as mum was doing so well I decided to go as it was only for the day. That night I told her that I was going and would come up to the hospital to see her as soon as the plane arrived back in Broken Hill.

Tuesday 27th January 2015

When my brother visited the hospital in the morning he found mum in a semi-conscious state. She barely recognised him. It was not long after this that a nurse came in and after taking her temperature another MET was called.

My brother rang me in Adelaide to tell me and to let me know that the doctor was going to ring me as well. It was not long after that when I received the phone call and I was put on speaker phone as my two brothers were with the doctor as well when he called. The doctor stated that it looked like her nasogastric tube had dislodged and the fluid may have gone back in her lungs. She had re-aspirated. The doctor then said when my plane arrives back in Broken Hill to come straight to the

hospital as her condition deteriorated. My brother informed me later that night that another MET had been called and she had been moved to a single room.

After arriving back from Adelaide at 7pm I drove straight to the hospital. I approached a nurse to ask about my mother. I was upset at her attitude... She said "hold on (holding her hand up to me), we are short-staffed tonight..., your mother is one of a few patients that had a MET tonight..., we're busy" This nurse never got back to me. A doctor came and informed me that my mother had been ordered a different antibiotic and if it worked she could return to normal. There was still a very good chance of this. I left the hospital with my brother around 11pm.

Wednesday 28th January 2015

Early hours in the morning I received a phone call from the nursing staff telling me that mum had deteriorated since their shift began. I drove straight to the hospital to stay there with her. I rang my two brothers and one of them decided to come up as well. During the night she was unresponsive. At approximately 7.30am a nurse came in to give mum her IV antibiotic. She noticed straight away that her cannula had been removed; therefore it could not be given. My mother never received the antibiotic that was ordered the day before. That was the antibiotic that could have save her. The nurse left the room to go and report her finding. Not long after she came back and asked me if I wanted a cannula inserted. I knew that the doctors rounds were about to begin so I thought it was best to wait for them. The doctors arrived shortly after and were informed of what had happened.

After reviewing my mother we were told that there was nothing else that could be done for her. Everything was ceased and we were told that she was now under Palliative care. This was the last the doctors spoke with us. We never saw them again... no one came to check to see how we are doing. Mum was later moved to a room across from the hospice room. Then a day and a half later she was moved to the hospice room. That is where my mother remained until she passed away five days later on Wednesday 4th February 2015.

At approximately 4.30pm on the afternoon that my mother died, myself and my brother were in the hospice room with her, there was a knock at the door and the Nurse Unit Manager walked in. She said "I believe that no-one has really explained anything to you about your mother". I replied "No. All I know is that my mother came in to have a cataract removed and now I am waiting for her to die".

The Nurse Unit Manager asked me to come out to the back room where we could have a bit of a chat. We had just sat ourselves down when my brother yelled "come quick". We both raced in as mum took her last breath and passed away. The chat never took place.

The following day I rang the hospital and arranged to meet with the Nurse Unit Manager and the Senior Physician. My brother and I met with them the following morning. I explained to them the concerns that I had with the care that my mother received. I was also upset that no medical staff spoke to us about my mother's condition since being told that she was palliative.

I have listed my key areas of concern:

1. Not being informed about the MET that my mother had in ICU
2. The aspiration pneumonia due to my mother not being supervised at meal times
3. The wrong size nasogastric tube being inserted
4. My brother finding my mother semi-conscious on the Medical ward

5. The dislodged nasogastric tube that caused the second aspiration
6. Not receiving the crucial antibiotic that could have saved my mother's life.

Both the Physician and Nurse Unit Manager agreed with everything I said. The Physician replied "we know that the hospital is not perfect and patients not being supervised during meal times are one of my biggest fears". There was no mention of why my mother had not received the antibiotic which could have saved her, which was ordered at least twelve and a half hours prior to them realising that there was no administration route for it to be given. The Nurse Unit Manager was going to get back to me with the outcome. I have not heard a thing since.

I have asked for this be investigated as my family and I need to understand how this could have happened to our beautiful mother. I have also been reflecting on me and my brothers' experiences with staff whilst our mum was in hospital.

While my mum was in ICU the Nurse Unit Manager never acknowledged us. I did not know he was in charge. He never said hello.

The nurses on medical didn't even know that mum came in for a cataract operation. It was terrible visiting mum in hospice.... Just waiting for mum to die.

Everything that happened to my mum was a comedy of errors. It's been terrible to see it all happen as a nurse. I have been working at this hospital since 1977. I've had past experiences involving my family that was bad and the events with my mum was a joke... not a funny one!

I still have unfinished business. Mum's rings are still sitting on the kitchen bench. I am yet to put them away. She was 83. She still has her kids and her grandkids. She led a happy life and she was independent with her activities of daily living until she came into hospital to have her cataract operation.

Story Taker Summary

Sheryl's story highlights both positive and negative aspects of the patient and carers journey as a whole through the hospital. Her story is in the process of being analysed by relevant unit staff with a focus on exploring what it is that patients and carers value whilst in our care.

The themes from Sheryl's story aim to inform staff in their quest to partnering with consumers and improve patient care.

Sheryl stated that she found this method of story-telling to be 'healing'. She said that she felt for the first time that 'someone has taken the time to listen' to what she has to say. Sheryl asked that she be provided with feedback on the current quality improvement projects through ICU and the Confused Hospitalised Older Persons (CHOPs) program in medical ward related to carer communication. I have undertaken to provide Sheryl with this feedback.
