

Submission
No 527

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 15 January 2021

Partially
Confidential

Dear Members of Parliament,

RE: Regional Health Inquiry

My name is _____, I live on the border of NSW and Victoria. I am submitting a letter of complaint relating to the treatment and substandard care of my husband, who passed away on 12th November 2020 at the age of 76.

My husband had lived with chronic heart failure for several years and in mid-2020 he had been diagnosed with Myelodysplastic Syndrome, a red blood cell disorder. He began treatment at the Albury Cancer Hospital for this condition in early September.

Days before he was due to receive his third round of treatment, I became concerned about his state of health and contacted a nurse at the hospital where he had been treated, she instructed me to take him for blood tests, which revealed that his red blood cell level was low. Upon receiving the results of these tests, the following day, his treating _____ instructed that I take him to the Albury Cancer Hospital for admission to receive a blood transfusion. My husband received 2 units of blood commencing at 10pm finishing at 4:30am followed by a third unit later that morning.

A nurse phoned me early that afternoon requesting that I come and get my husband from hospital and take him home, I questioned this decision and was told his treating _____ had deemed him well enough to leave.

Less than two days later I called for an ambulance because of his deteriorating condition. He was taken to the emergency department at the Albury base hospital. Later that evening our family were told at the emergency department that he had developed an infection, that his kidneys had or were shutting down and he would be treated with end-of-life care, with doctors telling us they believed he would pass overnight. Their father was still alert and communicating well with us.

He was then taken to the adjoining Albury Cancer Hospital and provided with a room. I stayed with my husband and in the morning, two members of the hospital team visited, separately, one stating that he was a miracle and the other saying that the doctors who treated him were all incredibly surprised that he had survived the night.

My husband had been taken off all his heart medication as the doctors believed they would have a further negative impact on his kidney's. From that point on our family battled for him to be treated actively whilst in this hospital.

On Tuesday 27th October shortly after 09:10am, I reported that my husband had oedema in his legs and asked for the _____ to examine him, at 10:55 she attended and said she was not concerned about his legs.

The senior doctor visited around 11:30am with two third year students to examine my husband and commented he had oedema in his legs and extended stomach. This doctor later returned at 3:30pm and performed further tests, I overheard her telling hospital staff that he was now acutely unwell, and he was to now be treated as a heart patient and no longer worry about the MDS.

Sometime after this, the same doctor visited him while I was present and asked what our plans were for his future care, I sensed what direction she was going with this conversation and asked to speak to her privately in another room.

We had this conversation and she told me that they could turn his implanted heart defibrillator off which would ultimately no longer support him. I told her I could not make that decision, I felt he had to be given the chance to rally.

I am unsure of the date of when the doctor returned, while I had briefly left the hospital, the same doctor returned and went into his while he was on his own and told him that he had terminal blood cancer, that he had used up all his nine lives and that he should get his affairs in order.

How do I know this? Because he told me when I returned. He was very distressed by this news, as we had up until that time, only ever been told he had MDS.

Later that afternoon his defibrillator went off, I had never witnessed this before and it absolutely terrified me to see him grimace in such pain, with his face twisted up and throwing his arms in the air, I witnessed this a further seven times in the final days of his life. On 5th November, the who had previously been treating him entered his room and asked me 'What do you want to do with him?'

They later told us there was no more they could do for him and we would have to decide where else he could go.

On 6th November, after sadly making that decision, he was transported by ambulance to the Corowa Hospital to be placed in palliative care. My husband passed away with his family around him on the 12th November 2020.

My husband and children's father had not given up on life, he fought hard to stay with us. It was only two days before he passed that he told his GP 'that he thought he was done'.

What right did the doctors at the Albury Base Hospital and Albury Cancer Hospital have, to make the decision to call his life over and deny him proper medical support upon his initial admission, ultimately giving him a chance to survive, which was his wish and that of his family.

We believe the treatment he received, leading up to and on the 20th and 21st October at the Albury Cancer Hospital at the direction of the treating _____ led to his premature passing.

Why did the _____ not consult with my husband's cardiologist, who was the referring doctor, or cardiologists at the adjoining hospital prior to him receiving such reckless treatment for a patient known to have a chronic heart failure condition?

We have since been informed by a cardiologist that a patient with his known heart condition should not have been given more than one unit of blood in a 24-hour period.

We ask you; do you believe my husband would have received a better standard of treatment and care at a major city hospital?