

Local NHS Trust slow to respond to complaint

10 November 2023



A complaint lodged against **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** regarding the care provided to the late **Doreen Pepper**, a Parkinson's patient, has raised concerns about medication management and now delayed complaint response times, leaving her family in distress.

Mrs. Pepper, a former Head Teacher at Merland Rise First School, Banstead, Surrey, lived an active, independent life despite battling Parkinson's for approximately 16 years. However, her experience at St Helier Hospital took a distressing turn after a fall resulted in a broken hip and subsequent admission.

The family's complaint, submitted on April 26, 2023, outlines a series of lapses in medication administration during Mrs. Pepper's five-week stay. Despite the hospital's policy allowing Parkinson's patients to self-administer their medication, A & E staff allegedly denied Mrs. Pepper access to her medication upon admission.

The hospital reportedly lacked an accurate record of Mrs. Pepper's medication until October 27, 2022, causing considerable concern for the family. Instances of incorrect medication administration persisted, despite interventions from senior staff members and the family's visual aids.

The family created an A4 poster with medication times, but Mrs. Pepper was still given medication at inappropriate hours, impacting her ability to participate in crucial physiotherapy sessions for her recovery.

The hospital deemed Mrs. Pepper fit for discharge, intending to send her home with carer visits four times a day. The family questioned the adequacy of supervision between visits and the absence of overnight support, receiving little guidance from the hospital regarding future care options.

Furthermore, a delayed referral for physiotherapy post-discharge resulted in a significant setback to Mrs. Pepper's mobility, exacerbating her condition.

In response to the family's complaint, a spokesperson for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust expressed regret over the extended response time. They assured a thorough investigation, led by senior clinical and management staff, and pledged to keep the family updated as they work towards a resolution.

The family, while acknowledging the strain on the NHS, urges hospitals to enhance complaint-handling processes to prevent prolonged distress for patients and their families awaiting answers on critical matters of care and accountability.