

Fareham and Gosport 
Primary Care Trust

Unit 180, Fareham Reach
166 Fareham Road
Gosport
PO13 OFH

Tel: 01329 233447
Fax: 01329 234984

3rd October, 2002

Mrs M Bulbeck

Code A

Dear Mrs Bulbeck

I am writing to you following the completion of the investigation undertaken by Consultant Nurse Williams in respect of the concerns you raised to the NMC regarding the care your late mother received at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

During her interview with you, Consultant Nurse Williams summarised the main areas of your concern to which you agreed:

- Nursing management of nutrition and fluids, skin care and continence
- Information and communication
- Attitudes - towards patients and relatives
- Who was accountable for the care
- Complaints procedure - picking up the clues that a relative is unhappy
- Documentation - concerns were not documented

I will try to cover each of these points based on the findings of the investigation.

Consultant Nurse Williams concluded that the nutritional screening form usually completed on admission was absent from your mother's medical records. However, there were daily summaries in the contact records which refer to nutritional and fluid intake. The food and fluid charts commenced on 1st June were found not to be an accurate record of intake and output.

Your mother's weight was recorded regularly and there was significant input from both Speech & Language Therapy and Dietetic departments. It was noted that despite written requests from the dietician within the medical records, food and fluid charts were not accurately maintained. Subcutaneous fluids were prescribed to supplement oral fluid intake.

In summary, the Investigating Officer concluded that nursing documentation was inadequate in relation to the assessment, planning and evaluation of care provision with regard to nutrition and hydration.

There is no reasonable explanation for the lack of documentation, which is clearly not acceptable. The Clinical Manager had been attempting to address this issue with the development of a "user friendly" charting system. Documentation is central to good quality patient care and in this instance fell well below the standard we would expect. A great deal of work is currently underway in relation to improving the documentation skills of nurses at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. Specifically:

- increased training for junior qualified staff in the planning of care
- appointment of a senior nurse (for 6 months) to work with staff developing their documentation skills
- the application of a set of national standards entitled Essence of Care, one of which specifically relates to documentation

I realise this does not in any way alleviate your concerns in relation to your mother but hope that you will appreciate that lessons are being learned and action is being taken to improve care.

In respect of the concerns you raised relating to staff attitude, the Investigating Officer could find no evidence to support or deny this because the nursing documentation does not record any of the discussions and issues raised. It is clear that staff had failed to pick up on your very serious concerns, despite their remembering many interactions with you. However, the Investigating Officer did conclude from her interviews with staff, that there was general concurrence regarding the amount of input your mother received and that there had been a genuine attempt to meet both your mother's and your own needs.

In relation to accountability, each doctor and nurse is accountable for their actions in respect of care of individual patients.

All the staff involved have been interviewed as part of this investigation and regret the distress you and your family are feeling.

Training events in respect of complaints handling are being arranged in order that staff will develop a better understanding in respect of identifying both patient and relative concerns and how to deal with them.

I appreciate this has been a very difficult time for you and your family and am genuinely sorry that you have been left feeling this way.

I am sorry that the care provided to your mother at this time did not come up to the standards we would hope to provide.

If there are issues about which you would like further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me. If it would be helpful to meet to discuss your complaint further I would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely

Code A

Alan Pickering
Acting Chief Executive