

By Dr.  
LORD  
Consultant  
G.M.H.K.

**Re- late Gladys Richards - Code A**

I am writing this in response to Lesley Humphrey's written request on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1998. I am the Consultant of Daedalus ward to which Mrs. Richards was admitted as a patient for NHS Continuing Care. She had been assessed at Haslar by Dr. Ian Reid who had also spoken to her 2 daughters. (Letter attached - Note 1). My wards rounds for the Continuing Care patients in Gosport are fortnightly on Mondays as I cover both Daedalus and Dryad wards. I was on Study leave on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> August 98. During her 2 short stays on Daedalus Ward (11/8 to 14./8 and 17/8 to 21/8) I did not attend to Mrs. Richards at all, nor did I have any contact with her daughters and hence the comments made are from what I have gathered from her medical, psychiatry and nursing notes, Sue Hutchings report, the sequence of events as documented by Mrs. Lesley Lack (Mrs. Richards' daughter) and from discussions with Philip Beed (Charge Nurse, Daedalus) and Dr. Jane Barton (Clinical Assistant). I have not had access to the Haslar records. The written complaint from Mrs. Lesley Lack, the documentation of the investigations and Sue Hutchings report of 11/9/98 were first made available to me on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 98.

In brief the sequence of events that affected Mrs. Gladys Richards -

30/7/98 - fall in Nursing Home, admitted to Halsar where she underwent a right hemiarthroplasty

11/8/98 - admitted to NHS Continuing Care Daedalus ward, GWMH - able to mobilise with frame and 2 persons

13/8/98 - fall on ward

14/8/98 - right hip x-rayed and subsequent transfer back to Haslar arranged. The same day s Closed hip relocation of right hip hemiarthroplasty was carried out under IV sedation. Nursing transfer letter states "rather unresponsive following the sedation"

17/8/98 - returned to Daedalus ward. On admission in pain and distress and was screaming loudly. She was given 5mg of Oramorph at 1 p.m. after discussion with a daughter who was present. A further Xray was arranged the same day and a dislocation excluded. This is also confirmed in the Radiologist's report.

18/8/98 - decision made following discussion with both daughters to commence a syringe driver containing Diamorphine. Mrs. Richards had required 45 mg Oramorph in a 24 hour period but seemed to be in considerable pain, discomfort and distress.

This was reviewed and renewed daily till Mrs. Richards passed away on 21/8.

I have itemised my comments as follows:

**1) Use of Diamorphine via a Syringe Driver**

All the documentation available supports the fact that Mrs. Richards was in very severe pain and distress, screaming loudly on return to Daedalus ward on 17/8. An X-Ray that same day excluded a 2<sup>nd</sup> dislocation (confirmed by Radiologist's report) and it was decided by the medical and nursing staff that good pain control would be the aim of management.

As Mrs. Richards was demented, her pain control was discussed with one of her daughters who agreed that Oramorph (the oral liquid preparation of Morphine) was

given. This has a short action and needs to be administered 4 hourly for adequate pain control. In spite of a substantial dose a day later, pain and distress was still a problem. Adequate nursing care was difficult to provide.

If someone is in considerable pain after having received regular Oramorph then the next step up the analgesic ladder is Diamorphine. The syringe driver was chosen as it delivers a continuous dose of Diamorphine over a 24 hour period, and hence 4 hourly injections are not required. It was also possible to add in Haloperidol 5 mg/24hours into the syringe driver. Mrs. Richards had been on this prior to her initial admission to Haslar. This was to treat agitation which had been a problem in the Nursing Home and occasionally at night on Daedalus Ward. Due to her underlying dementia, and inability to communicate fully, her distress could have been due to an element of anxiety and hence Midazolam was added to the syringe driver as an anxiolytic.

The above anaesthesia and sedation was considered necessary for Mrs. Richards to keep her comfortable and aimed at addressing pain, anxiety and agitation.

## **2) Decision not to start intravenous fluids.**

Having established with Mrs. Richards daughters that she required opiates for pain control, we were now in the situation of providing palliative care. Basic nursing care, including mouth care was not possible as Mrs. Richards could not understand and comply with requests and was also in considerable distress. In this instance parenteral fluids are often not used as they do not significantly alter the outcome. If this is necessary in order to keep the mouth dry and skin hydrated, it is done by the subcutaneous route only on NHS continuing care wards. Patients requiring intravenous fluids would need to be transferred to an acute bed at Haslar or QA. Mrs. Richards was 91 years of age, frail, confused and had been twice to Haslar for surgical procedures and hence a 3<sup>rd</sup> transfer back for intravenous fluids only would not have been appropriate. I do not feel that the lack of intravenous fluids for the 4 days that Mrs. Richards was on a syringe driver significantly altered the outcome.

The concern about the lack of intravenous fluids was not raised by either daughter on Daedalus ward prior to her death and isn't included in Mrs. Lacks' written comments/questions.

## **3) What was agreed with Mrs. Lack and Mrs. McKenzie**

The administration of the 1<sup>st</sup> dose of Oramorph on 17/8 was discussed and agreed with a daughter prior to it being administered. Consent was obtained for the doses to be repeated to ensure adequate anaesthesia. The administration of subcutaneous morphine via a syringe driver was discussed on 18/8 and agreed by both daughters. Both these discussions were carried out by C/N Philip Beed.

**Code A**

Dr.A.Lord, Consultant Geriatrician  
22/12/98

