

General Secretary:
Christine Hancock
BSc(Econ) RGN

Patrons:
Her Majesty the Queen
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth
the Queen Mother
Her Royal Highness
the Princess Margaret
Countess of Snowdon

20 Cavendish Square
London W1M 0AB

Code A

2nd December 1991

Mr C West,
District General Manager,
District Offices,
St. Mary's Hospital,
Milton,
Portsmouth,
Hants. PO3 6AD

ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
NURSING



Dear Chris,

I am seeking your advice on how best to resolve a problem which was brought to my attention in April 1991 but apparently has been present for the last 2 years.

I was contacted by a staff nurse who is currently employed on night duty in Redclyffe Annexe, her concern was that patients within Redclyffe were being prescribed Diamorphine who she felt did not always require it, the outcome being that the patient died. The drug was always being administered via 'syringe drivers'. It is fair to say that this member of staff was speaking on behalf of a group of her colleagues.

On my advice the staff nurse wrote to Isobel Evans, Patient Care Manager putting forward her requirements under the UKCC Code of Professional Conduct. Following this I had a meeting with Isobel Evans Patient Care Manager on the 26th April 1991, the outcome of this was that a 'policy' would be produced to specifically address the prescribing and administration of controlled drugs within Redclyffe. In addition a meeting would be held with the staff and Isobel where they could voice their concerns, this meeting took place on the 11th July 1991 and the minutes circulated, as these give a clear outline of the concerns of the staff I have enclosed a copy for your perusal.

Following the aforesaid meeting two study days on 'Pain Control' were arranged, as you will see from the minutes relating to the meeting of the 11th July 1991 some of the concerns voiced by the staff were that diamorphine was being prescribed for patients who were not in pain. These study days did temporarily alleviate the worries of the staff.

Regrettably the concerns of the staff have once again returned, one of the staff nurses who is currently on an ENB course was talking about this subject to Gerrie Whitney, Community Tutor, Continuing Education. Gerrie visited Redclyffe on the 31st October 1991 and subsequently wrote a report. Copies of her report were circulated to Isobel, Bill Hooper and Sue Frost, as I feel it is pertinent I have obtained Gerrie's permission to enclose a copy.



After receiving this report Isobel responded by sending a 'memo' (copy enclosed) to the trained staff at Redclyffe. As the 'concerns' had now apparently become "allegations" I wrote to Isobel voicing my concern on this point, also that she had to date not produced the policy to which we had agreed in April 1991. I also informed her that it was my view that unless I heard to the contrary a grievance would have to be lodged. To date Isobel has not responded.

I feel the staff have acted professionally and with remarkable restraint considering that it is fair to say that since highlighting their concerns there has been a certain amount of ostracization. After talking to the staff and thinking it through I now feel that a grievance may not completely resolve this issue. I have been told that it is only a small group of night staff who are 'making waves', this could be true as a majority of the day staff have left over the period of 2 years that this situation has been present, whether this was a reason for their leaving I am unsure.

I have various concerns, for the patients and subsequently their relatives, the staff in that they are working in this environment but also that this could be leaked to the media. While none of the staff or myself have any desire whatsoever to use this means there is serious concern from both myself and the staff that someone could actually leak this and I hope you know my feelings about the media and using it as a means of resolving problems. On this basis alone I hope you agree with me in that we have to address this issue urgently.

As I stated at the beginning I am seeking your advice on what I think you will now feel is a difficult problem. I must stress that none of the staff have shown any malice in what they have said and that their only concern is for the patient.

Your comments/advice would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Murray
Branch Convenor
25 Dysart Avenue,
East Cosham,
Fortsomouth,
Hants. PO6 2LY