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To: [transferofcare](#)
Subject: My mother's story
Date: Thursday, 28 September 2023 2:10:19 PM

My mother died on 29 March 2023 of a perforated bowel.

My mum, Fiona, was 82 years old. She was a resident at Korongee Dementia Village; she had moderate Alzheimers. She was also recently a widow - my father died on 5 January 2023, just 12 weeks earlier.

On Friday 24 March at around 8pm, my sister was contacted by Korongee staff, who said that my mum wasn't well, with stomach pains, and they had called an ambulance. They said they would phone back when the ambulance arrived, so we could meet them (with mum) at the hospital.

At around 11pm we contacted Korongee, as we hadn't heard anything from them. They told us that the ambulance hadn't arrived yet; but that they had called again requesting assistance. They said that mum was in a lot of pain and quite distressed. At that time, I said I would go over to Korongee and sit with mum.

My mum's alzheimers wasn't bad enough that she didn't recognise my sister or I; she knew who we were. Her short-term memory was badly affected, though, and she did become confused fairly easily. When I arrived she said to me *"Someone's hurt me. I can't remember what they did, but someone's hurt me"*. She was crying. She could not understand that no-one had hurt her; that she actually had 'a very bad tummy ache' - all she could understand was that she was in pain, and in her confused mind she felt that someone must have hurt her. Over the course of the next 2-3 hours, she repeated over and over that someone had hurt her - and I couldn't do anything to ease her mind - or her pain.

The ambulance finally arrived at almost 2am - 6 hours after being called. In those 6 hours, my mum's pain became worse. She could not keep anything down, and so had not had any kind of pain relief (ie Panadol). She was very distressed.

Korongee staff told me that they had called for the ambulance either 3 or 4 times, and had stressed to the dispatcher that they weren't calling because a dementia patient was 'acting out', but that there was a genuine, medical issue. Staff were told that all ambulances were on other calls or waiting at hospital.

Once the ambulance arrived, the paramedics were fantastic - I can't speak highly enough of them. They were calm, understanding, patient. They even managed to get mum sent to Hobart Private, rather than RHH - where, no doubt, her wait would have been even longer.

About 5am, after being scanned and checked by medical staff, I was told that mum had a perforated bowel. She died 5 days later.

My mum wasn't one of the patients stuck in Emergency for hours and hours before ambulance staff could hand her over to hospital staff. However, I do believe she was still a 'victim' of ambulance ramping - if the system were better, and patients able to be handed over more quickly, mum would not have had to wait 6 hours for the ambulance arrive. Six hours. An 82 year old woman, confused and scared and in increasing pain. Six hours.

I don't know if the outcome would have been any different if an ambulance had got to mum earlier. We'll never know. What I do know, though, is that she wouldn't have been in pain for that amount of time. They could have started pain meds much earlier and she could have been (at least a little) more comfortable much earlier. As it was, I had to sit with her for hours, unable to do anything to relieve her pain. Pain she was in for 6 hours. With no relief. A vulnerable, confused 82 year old lady. Six hours.

It was heartbreaking to watch and experience; I am distressed that my mother's last few conscious hours were filled with pain.

We need to do so much better.

Kind regards,

Megan Kube

