



Northern Health



Our Ref: ML-15-001-Ebbage
Your Ref: COR 2014 006367

24 August 2016

BY COURIER

Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank, VIC 3006

Dear Registrar

Re: Finding into the death of Audrey Ebbage (Finding)

I refer to the Finding of Coroner Hawkins dated 30 May 2016. In accordance with section 72(3) and 72(4) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic), please find below Northern Health's response to the Recommendation made by Her Honour. I confirm that Northern Health has accepted Her Honour's Recommendation in full, implemented training in accordance with the Recommendation and will continue to use this case as a training example not just to its junior medical staff, but to its broader clinical and medical workforce.

Training to new paediatric junior medical staff

I confirm that Audrey's case is used as a case study to all new paediatric junior medical staff who commence at Northern Health. The training highlights and educates the junior medical staff on:

1. The need for escalation:
 - a. From junior medical staff to senior medical staff;
 - b. From nursing staff to medical staff; and
 - c. From patient and family concern to hospital medical and nursing staff;
2. Emphasis on the ViCTOR chart, pre-MET, MET, Code Blue and the newly implemented R.E.A.C.H (Recognise, Engage, Act, Call, Help is on its way) program;
3. Consideration for differential diagnoses and management strategies; and
4. Changes implemented at Northern Health following Audrey's death including:
 - a. Senior medical staff supervision;
 - b. Use of ViCTOR charts; and
 - c. Clear documented internal escalation processes such as pre-Met and MET system, Code Blue System and R.E.A.C.H.

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Training to the broader clinical workforce and implementation of R.E.A.C.H

Northern Health is developing a patient centred education package to be used organisation wide, including in orientation for new staff. The package will be focused on the 'human aspect' of Audrey's case taking into account not just the patient, but the patient's carers and relatives, who in such circumstances can provide detailed, important information which can assist clinicians.

In addition to the above education package, specific education sessions are planned for nursing staff in relation to escalation of care, focusing on the specifics of this case.

Although not part of Her Honour's recommendation, I confirm that Northern Health has launched a patient / carer escalation process, R.E.A.C.H (formerly known as Call Me at Northern Health). The R.E.A.C.H program was developed by the NSW Clinical Excellence Commission's Partnering with Patients Program and enables the patient, family or carer to escalate concerns about the condition of themselves or their loved ones while they are in hospital. The R.E.A.C.H process acknowledges that patients, family and carers can recognise other signs of deterioration before they are clinically evident.

As part of implementing R.E.A.C.H at Northern Health, specific education sessions were conducted in relation to the process, which highlights that R.E.A.C.H does not replace the process of staff escalating clinical concern through MET escalation, and that Northern Health actively encourages and supports staff to escalate patient / carer concern through the various MET processes.


I confirm that the Finding was disseminated to Northern Health's senior clinical and managerial workforce for further dissemination to specific clinical units, noting particular attention to Her Honour's Comment in the Finding in which she states "*A hospital's culture is integral to its effective operation*". As part of Northern Health's ongoing commitment to its junior workforce, particular attention is being drawn to the senior workforce and their ability to lead by example, specifically, that they are available and approachable to junior staff without junior staff fearing repercussions of any form.

On behalf of Northern Health, I would like to thank Coroner Hawkins for provided the opportunity to demonstrate Northern Health's commitment to continuous organisation improvement.

Yours sincerely



Siva Sivarajah
Chief Executive Officer

 CC John Snowdon – Chief Legal Officer