

## Transcript

### Doreen:

Doreen was a 94 year old woman who had advanced dementia which left her unable to communicate. She normally lived in a nursing home. Doreen had a complex medical history, and was admitted to hospital because of a general deterioration in her condition and also because she was vomiting continuously.

The doctors recognised that Doreen was dying and told her family that their goal was to make her as comfortable as possible.

Doreen's daughter, Angela, accepted this and spent as much time as she could with her mother during what she knew would be the last days of her life.

Doreen was placed in a side room on the ward, which was 'a nice room with a big light window'.

*"We were relieved that they actually were doing something about mum's pain... and if this was her time, we were glad that they were just making her comfortable."*

Think back to Susan's account of Andrew's death.

If you recall, Susan wanted her brother to remain in the bay on the ward while he was dying, as she was afraid that he would be unnoticed in a side room.

Angela, however, had a different view about the side room as a place for her mother. In this case, the family visited regularly, but not for extended periods of time. She liked the room with a big window that let in lots of light, and the privacy for herself and other family members when they came to see Doreen.

This highlights the way in which family carers can have different opinions about aspects of their relative's care.

After Doreen had been in hospital for a few days, her consultant suggested that she should be moved back to the nursing home. Doreen was recognised to be dying and unable to benefit from further active medical care, and it was thought to be desirable that she return to her usual place of residence to die, rather than remain in hospital.

Initially Angela and her husband agreed but, on reflection, they changed their minds, feeling that the move back to the nursing home would be disruptive and distressing for Doreen, and also that the hospital could provide better care.

They felt that the hospital wanted to discharge Doreen because they needed the bed for another patient.

In the face of their resistance Doreen's consultant agreed that she should stay in hospital until she died.

In this case Doreen herself was unable to express her preference for place of death because of the advanced stage of her dementia.

*"We were distressed because we thought, Oh my God, they obviously need the bed, but what about mum, you know?"*

When a patient's own wishes are not known and cognitive impairment affects their ability to communicate and express preferences for care, who do you think should have the greatest responsibility for making decisions on their behalf: family carers or health professionals?

Hospital care is very expensive. There is immense pressure to discharge patients who have no medical need to be in hospital so that others can benefit from acute specialist care.

Do you think that Doreen's doctors should have insisted that she return to the nursing home to die?

Or was it appropriate that Angela and her family should be allowed to decide what was best, bearing in mind that Doreen herself was unable to say what she would want?