



Press release

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BEDSORES LED TO AMPUTATION AFTER NURSING HOME NEGLECT

An elderly woman from Wimbledon has received a “substantial” compensation payment after severe bedsores led to gangrene and her leg being amputated.

Catherine Connolly was 74 and waiting for a hip replacement when she fell at home, and so needed to be cared for in a nursing home until after the operation. After a short stay in a home in London, where she developed a pressure sore on her right heel, Mrs Connolly entered the Lancaster Lodge Nursing Home in Wimbledon, run by Parkcare Homes Ltd. A fortnight later, in November 1998, Mrs. Connolly’s daughter, Anne McCready, received a phone call to say her mother had been rushed to St. George’s Hospital suffering with gangrenous pressure sores on both her heels and her sacrum, as well as dehydration and diabetes.

“We were horrified,” said Mrs. McCready, “and really worried. She was in a dreadful state. We were told at one point there was no hope, and she would die, but then they said they might save her if they amputated her leg above the knee.

“But it wasn’t just her leg, “ she continued, “there were big sores on the bottom of her back too, and they had to be cut out. She had to have a colostomy to try to help the wound to heal, even though there was nothing wrong with her bowels.”

The family was told this wound was unlikely ever to close completely.

To add to Mrs Connolly’s problems, as she was recovering from the operation, her false teeth were lost, so she was unable to eat proper food.

The family called in Bolt Burdon Kemp, a firm of solicitors based in Islington.

“This was a clear case of negligence,” said Julia Hines, Mrs Connolly’s solicitor in Bolt Burdon Kemp’s specialist Healthcare team. “The sores were getting worse and worse, yet the staff at the home didn’t recognise Mrs. Connolly’s diabetes, which put her at particular risk. “

After several months in hospital, Mrs. Connolly spent a year in a convalescent home before moving in with her daughter. Her son, Terry, gave up work to care for her during the day. She is still, six years later, in pain and uses a wheelchair, though she rarely leaves the house.

“Before this happened,” said Anne McCready, “my mother was a strong, healthy, good looking woman. Afterwards we could hardly recognise her. She doesn’t want to go out because she hates people looking at her.”

“Our case was quite straightforward,” said Julia Hines. “It is nearly always possible to prevent pressure sores with proper nursing care. For Catherine’s condition to be allowed to deteriorate to such a state was really shocking. There was a time when proper treatment could have avoided both the amputation and the colostomy, but the home did not act quickly enough.”

“Catherine must have been in agony, which I think is reflected in the settlement ,” she continued. “She is a very brave woman, and luckily has had fantastic support from her family, who now provide her with excellent care. Against all the odds they have managed to heal her pressure sores completely. Everyone involved in

the case, including the defendant's team recognised what a wonderful job they have done. It has been a great privilege to help such a warm and loving family."

Although initially Parkcare Homes Ltd denied responsibility, the matter was finally settled shortly before the case was due in court. Mrs. Connolly was awarded £85,000 for pain and suffering alone, as well as money for her future care, the cost of various aids and special equipment and for building work on the house.

"Catherine's story shows what can happen when elderly patients are left on waiting lists instead of getting the treatment they need straight away. More importantly, I hope this case sends a message to nursing homes that they cannot afford to provide poor standards of care," said Julia Hines.

"I'm pleased we were able to get such a good settlement for a lady who's now 80 years old. Often claims for elderly patients are assumed to be of lower value. The fact that we were able to get a substantial amount for this particular case, proves that an elderly life is still an important life. "

ENDS

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