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Hospital 'made my mother worse'

Elizabeth Smith's 85-year-old mother has the misfortune to have Parkinson's Disease.

But with the right medication in two hourly doses her condition, though difficult, is pretty much tolerable.

The problem is that whenever she has to be admitted to hospital perhaps after a fall - which happens from time to time - she has her medicines confiscated.

And the nurses and doctors dealing with her do not always understand how vital it is that she gets the drugs she needs to manage her condition at the right times.

Ms Smith, from Leeds, says: "The timing of medication is one of the most critical things in Parkinson's Disease because every patient has their medication designed for their condition and every condition is slightly different.

"If my mother doesn't get her medication on time she loses her mobility.

"She can't walk and she can't move her arms. They become very heavy and painful and her neck gets painful and she finds it hard to support her head," she said.

"It also affects the muscles in her throat. She finds breathing very difficult and she can't speak.

"It's not life threatening but it's very frightening for her and she feels as if it is life threatening because she is gasping for breath.



Without medication Parkinson's patients can suffer terribly

“ It took about a week of serious conflict with the staff to bring her medication in line with what it should be ”

Elizabeth Smith

“ When the doctors and nurses saw how badly she was affected they were very concerned ”

Elizabeth Smith

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"It is patently obvious to anyone looking that she is suffering."

Over the last year, Ms Smith's mother has been admitted to three different hospitals and her experience has been different in each one.

Most recently she was admitted to a hospital in the North of England after a fall and, as expected, her medication was confiscated.

'They understood'

Ms Smith said: "I was upset about this because I knew what would happen.

"But when the doctors and nurses saw how badly she was affected they were very concerned.

"They tried very hard to hurry her tablets from the pharmacy. The main problem was the hospital rules about confiscating the medication."

However, her experience of another hospital in the region was completely different.

"She had a dreadful experience - it was extremely traumatic.

"When I arrived from work she had been eight hours without her medication.

"It took about a week of serious conflict with the staff to bring her medication in line with what it should be.

"She was in there for three weeks and I was really shocked to see that her doctor just did not understand the needs of Parkinson's Disease patients."

The third hospital experience was far more positive, says Ms Smith.

"They were very good to her. They understood, partly because they had a Parkinson's Disease specialist who operates a clinic from the hospital.

"They really wanted to learn about Parkinson's and were happy to learn from her."

Harm

But Ms Smith despite these unpleasant experiences her mother is one of the lucky ones because she has someone to speak up for her when she is suffering.

“ Sooner or later someone is going to take legal action against these hospitals because they are doing the patient harm ”

Elizabeth Smith

Others are not so fortunate, she says and may depend on elderly spouses who do not have the energy to fight their battles.

"I've always thought the first rule of the medical profession was, 'Don't do the patient any harm.'

"Sooner or later someone is going to take legal action against these hospitals because they are doing the patient harm.

"My mother's experience in the third hospital shows that this can be done.

"We do need, however, to change the policy so that patients can at least self-medicate until their medication arrives."

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