

Caritas Medical Centre announces sentinel event

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

â€‹The spokesperson for Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) announces a sentinel event today (March 5):

A 75-year-old male patient, who had a medical history of hypertension and Alzheimer's disease, started a puree diet instead of a minced diet in February this year.

The patient was admitted to CMC for abdominal pain and constipation on February 28. During hospitalisation, the patient was kept nil by mouth, and the doctor arranged intravenous therapy for him. On the morning of March 2, the patient's condition was improving, and his diet order was changed to "fluid diet" after the doctor's assessment.

The patient was reassessed by the case doctor on March 3. As the patient had bowel opened, the doctor changed the patient's diet order from "fluid diet" to "diet as tolerated". Near lunchtime, the nurse overseeing the patient interpreted the adjustment as allowing the patient to have a regular meal after reading through the diet order made by the doctor. A regular meal was therefore served to the patient for lunch subsequently.

A student nurse followed the diet order to feed the patient. The patient could chew and swallow and showed no abnormalities at the beginning of feeding. The student nurse continued to monitor his condition. However, the patient suddenly started coughing after a few mouthfuls of food. The patient developed cardiac arrest. The team performed resuscitation for the patient promptly. However, the patient's condition continued to deteriorate, and he finally succumbed at around 1.30pm on the same day.

The hospital is very concerned about the incident and is deeply saddened by the patient's passing. The hospital has met with the patient's family to explain details of the incident and extended sincere apologies and condolences. All possible assistance will be rendered to the family.

The hospital has reported the incident to the Hospital Authority Head Office. A root cause analysis panel will be set up to investigate the incident thoroughly. The investigation and recommended improvement measures will be completed within eight weeks. The hospital has subsequently devised enhanced measures to remind all healthcare staff to strengthen communication and ascertain their understanding of patients' clinical condition and treatment arrangements. The incident has also been reported to the coroner for follow-up.

The Root Cause Analysis Panel members are as follows:

Chairperson:

Dr Lau Ka Hin

Clinical Stream Coordinator (Medical), Hong Kong East Cluster

Members

Professor Chair Sek Ying

Vice-Director of Research, The Nethersole School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mr Chan Man Nok

Chief Nursing Officer, Nursing Services Department, Hospital Authority

Dr Raymond Cheung

Chief Manager (Patient Safety and Risk Management), Hospital Authority

Mr Lam Yan Ki

Department Manager (Speech Therapy), Kowloon East Cluster

Dr Lau Chi Hung

Chief of Service (Surgery), Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Dr Ben Wong

Clinical Services Coordinator (Surgery), Caritas Medical Centre