

**Resuscitation of rest home resident
17HDC01484, 13 June 2019**

Rest home ~ Registered nurse ~ Choking ~ Resuscitation ~ Policy ~ Right 4(1)

A caregiver discovered an elderly rest-home resident choking in the dining room, and administered two back slaps before a registered nurse took charge. The nurse found the woman to be unresponsive, with no signs of breathing and no radial pulse. She instructed another nurse to call 111, and administered four hard back slaps.

When the back slaps proved to be ineffective, the nurse moved the woman from the dining room and lowered her onto the floor, and again checked for a pulse and any signs of breathing. The nurse made no attempt to perform CPR while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. When the paramedics arrived, they found that mashed potato was blocking the woman's airway. No pulse could be found, and subsequently the woman was pronounced dead.

Findings

It was held that by failing to commence CPR once the woman was first assessed as non-responsive, the nurse failed to provide services to the woman with reasonable care and skill, and breached Right 4(1). Adverse comment was made about the nurse's incomplete documentation of the event, as well as her inadequate communication with the family following the woman's death.

By providing annual basic life-support training to staff, it was held that the rest home had taken such steps as were reasonably practicable to prevent the nurse's breach of the Code. As such, the rest home was not found in breach of the Code.

Recommendations

It was recommended that the nurse provide a written apology to the family for her breach of the Code.

It was also recommended that the Nursing Council of New Zealand undertake a competency review of the nurse's emergency responses, and that the rest home develop a system for monitoring non-clinical staff compliance with basic life-support training, and send all staff involved in this event to a full first aid/CPR Level 2 course.