



Health and Disability Commissioner
Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga

Care home and registered nurse breach the Code for inadequate wound management

20HDC00726

In a report issued today, Aged Care Commissioner Carolyn Cooper found a care home and a registered nurse breached the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code) for their care of a female resident.

The woman, who had a complex medical history, lived in rest home level care where she received wound management for her right foot in the weeks prior to her death.

Ms Cooper said deficiencies in the care provided to the woman by care home staff were systemic issues for which the care home was responsible. She found the care home breached Right 4 of the Code, which gives consumers the right to an appropriate standard of care | Tuatikanga.

“The care home’s systems were inadequate to support the woman’s timely care, intervention, and referral to more specialised care,” Ms Cooper said.

The breach covered several deficiencies in care. Weekly photographs of the woman’s wounds were not taken, despite this being a requirement of the Wound Care policy. Records were confusing and the referral system was unclear.

Ms Cooper considered that the registered nurse, as the person responsible for the overall care and direction of all resident and staff at the care home, also breached Right 4 of the Code.

The nurse did not manage the woman’s referral to the wound clinic satisfactorily and her record-keeping was deficient with respect to the woman’s wounds, leg pain and ongoing management. In addition, the nurse did not follow the care home’s Wound Care policy.

Ms Cooper also made an adverse comment about the care provided by two GPs. Although their actions did not amount to a breach of the Code, a breakdown in communication between the medical and nursing staff resulted in the woman’s referral being overlooked and treatment delayed.

Ms Cooper expressed her sincere condolences to the woman’s family for their loss.

Since these events, the care home has made several changes, including making improvements to GP communication and documentation and defining the process around referrals during GP rounds.

Ms Cooper recommended the care home, nurse and a GP provide written apologies to the woman's family. She also recommended that the nurse reflect on her standard of record-keeping and that the GP review the level of detail in his clinical records.

11 March 2024

Editor's notes

Please note the decision has been made not to name the care home in this decision because it would unfairly compromise the privacy interests of individuals.

Please only use the photo provided with this media release. For any questions about the photo, please contact the communications team.

The full report of this case can be viewed on HDC's website - see HDC's '[Latest Decisions](#)'.

Names have been removed from the report to protect privacy of the individuals involved in this case.

The Commissioner will usually name providers and public hospitals found in breach of the Code unless it would not be in the public interest or would unfairly compromise the privacy interests of an individual provider or a consumer. More information for the media, including HDC's naming policy and why we don't comment on complaints, can be found on our website [here](#).

HDC promotes and protects the rights of people using health and disability services as set out in the [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights](#) (the Code).

In 2022/23 HDC made 592 quality improvement recommendations to individual complaints and we have a high compliance rate of around 96%.

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