

# Nurses at Stafford who left woman to die can keep jobs

**NURSES** at the disgraced Stafford Hospital who left an elderly woman to die and then recorded that she was just sleeping have been allowed to keep their jobs.

Evelyn Agbeko and Theresia Van Der Knaap escaped being struck off at a hearing yesterday despite being found guilty of serious blunders at the hospital.

They will now be free to keep treating vulnerable patients after a disciplinary hearing ruled that despite their failings they still 'have a contribution to make' as nurses.

The verdicts stunned campaigners, who said allowing them to keep practising sent a 'dangerous message' to those in the health service whose incompetence has claimed lives.

Up to 1,200 patients were believed to have died unnecessarily at Stafford Hospital over three years.

A previous hearing heard that in April 2010 Agbeko and Van

By **Paul Bentley**

Der Knaap failed to provide basic life support for an 81-year-old woman they found unresponsive.

As the pensioner's life drained away, they did not start chest compressions or call doctors.

After the patient died, Van Der Knaap, from Holland, remarked: 'In my country, if they have died, then they have died.'

Agbeko recorded that the

## 'Failed to provide nursing care'

woman was sleeping after she had died.

She later said it was a mistake and that there was also confusion over whether there was a 'do not resuscitate' order in place.

The pair claimed they had been forced to cut corners after hospital bosses reduced staffing levels.

Agbeko said she would often

work a 15-hour shift without a break. Both nurses were found guilty of misconduct. Agbeko was allowed to keep her job on condition that she is supervised for a year and completes courses in life support and record-keeping. Van Der Knaap was given a two-year caution.

Nursing and Midwifery Council panel chairman Martin Parker said Agbeko 'failed to provide fundamental nursing care' and there was a 'risk of repetition', but added: 'It would not be in the public interest to remove a registered nurse who has a contribution to make.'

He said Van Der Knaap's conduct was 'unacceptable' but she 'has demonstrated excellent commitment to nursing during her 35 years as a nurse'.

Julie Bailey, who started campaign group Cure the NHS after the death of her mother at Stafford, said she was disappointed with the verdicts. 'This sends a dangerous signal to those in the NHS that you can be responsible for someone's death and get away with it,' she said.

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