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## Reality of bed-blocking

SIR - For the past three days my 91-year-old husband has been occupying a hospital bed, waiting to be assessed. He is on a nil-by-mouth regime, to avoid choking. We are waiting for a Salt (speech and language therapy) team to decide his treatment but, in spite of numerous calls by the ward nurses and the doctor, the team neither appears nor says when it will come.

Meanwhile, my husband lies in bed, neither fed nor watered, unassessed and untreated. As his sole carer for the past two years, I have a fair idea of what he can and cannot swallow, and what might sensibly be done about this. However, even the doctor on the ward is not allowed to make a decision about my husband's care and thus get him back to his private nursing home and free his hospital bed.

The system is not only inefficient and costly, it leaves a patient in distress.

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