

Family row over patient's life support

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The children of a brain-damaged woman who once suggested she would want family to "get the pillow ready" if her health declined are fighting their aunts and doctors over whether their mother should continue receiving medical treatment.

The woman, a grandmother in her 70s known only as Mrs P for legal reasons, suffered a head injury after a fall last year. Since then she has been fed through a tube and doctors agree that she is now in a "minimally conscious state".

The family's rift has been played out in a courtroom. While Mrs P's sisters support the argument of the NHS foundation trust caring for her that an artificial feed should be maintained to see whether her condition improves, Mrs P's children and partner believe that this would not be in her best interests and that she should instead receive palliative care in a hospice.

The trust has applied to a Court of Protection judge for permission to continue providing the clinical treatment and to transfer Mrs P to a specialist nursing home.

A hearing at Preston Sessions House yesterday was told that before her accident Mrs P was a "very switched on" woman and that she now "lacks the capacity to make free decisions" and cannot communicate. The court was told that in a chatty email to one of her daughters she once suggested that her family should "get the pillow ready" should she lose cognitive function.

The hearing continues today.