

NHS payout after woman kept alive against her wishes

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The family of an 81-year-old woman has received £45,000 in compensation and an apology from the NHS after she was kept alive against her will.

Brenda Grant, from Nuneaton, Warwickshire, had made a living will saying that if she were no longer of sound mind or suffered specified ailments she should not be given treatment to prolong her life.

However, the document was lost among her medical notes and she was artificially fed for 22 months after a catastrophic stroke.

Her decision to make the will was prompted by seeing her own mother

Barker, told the BBC: "She had a fear of being kept alive because she had a fear of going into a nursing home. She never wanted to be a burden to anybody, so she wouldn't have wanted any of us to look after her."

She had not told her children about the advance directive, but Mrs Grant's GP alerted them to it shortly before she was readmitted to hospital and argued alongside them that it should be respected. The tubes were withdrawn and she died a few days later on August 4, 2014.

Mrs Barker, 55, said: "I'm very, very angry with myself that I let my mum suffer for two years. I didn't want my mum to die, nobody wants their mum to die. But my mum died the day she had that stroke. I know she would not have wanted to live like she was."

Mrs Barker said she had sought legal advice to prevent other families going through the same thing.

The George Eliot Hospital Trust, which now records any advance directive on the front of patients' notes, admitted liability and agreed to pay £45,000 in an out-of-court settlement. It stated: "It is accepted that the trust failed to act in accordance with the deceased's advanced directive and failed to store the advanced directive in a way that it could easily be noted."

Natalie Koussa, director of partnerships and services at Compassion in Dying, said: "This case should serve as a wake-up call for NHS trusts and other health and social care providers that there is an urgent need to improve record keeping for advance decisions, ensure joined-up working among staff and communicate with the family of patients in their care."



**Brenda Grant, 81,
feared indignity
more than death**

lose her independence through dementia. Mrs Grant had said she feared degradation and indignity more than death. The advance directive said that she should not be given food and that distressing symptoms should be controlled by pain relief, even if that might shorten her life.

Her stroke in October 2012 left her unable to talk, walk or swallow. After three months, doctors at George Eliot hospital in Nuneaton fitted a stomach peg so that she could be fed directly and discharged her to a nursing home. Staff there put mittens on Mrs Grant's hands after she tried to pull the feeding tubes out of her arm. Her daughter, Tracy