

## **Death of Gillian Astbury Neglect Verdict Reached**

The inquest into the death of Mrs Gillian Astbury who died after falling into a diabetic coma at Stafford General Hospital, concluded yesterday at Stafford Coroner's Court with a verdict of death by neglect.

Sarah Huntbach from Anthony Collins Solicitors, representing Mrs Astbury's family commented: The family have finally been given the answers they've been waiting for following the tragic and needless death of Gillian over three years ago.

Mrs Astbury, aged 66, a Grandmother from Hednesford, Staffordshire, was admitted to hospital for bed rest following a fall. Gillian had been an insulin-dependent diabetic since 1989 and, on being admitted to hospital, had a diabetic care plan drawn up to monitor and manage her diabetes. Gillian had been unable to manage this herself following a stroke four years earlier and suffered from confusion and memory problems. Gillian died after falling untreated into a fatal diabetic coma.

The inquest was heard in front of Coroner, Andrew Haigh, and because the systemic failings were so serious, this the first of the Stafford General Hospital cases to be heard in front of an independent jury.

During the two day inquest the jury listened to statements from witnesses and the family. The jury concluded that Gillian Astbury's death was contributed to by serious shortcomings in systems and in the implementation, monitoring and management of the systems in place at the time. Adding to that nursing facilities were poor, staffing levels low, training was poor and record-keeping and communication systems were poor and inadequately managed.

Ultimately, the jury found that the failure to give insulin and measure blood levels on 10th April 2007 was clearly a gross failure to provide basic care to Mrs Astbury and the nursing fell well short of the Nursing and Midwifery Council's code of conduct.

Simon Michael, Barrister representing the family at the inquest added: It has now been accepted by the employees of the Trust and by the jury that their performance fell below a reasonable standard of nursing.

If there is one lesson to be learned from the events, as we enter another period when many NHS Trusts will have to cut down on costs, it is that costs cannot be cut without careful planning and consideration of the impact on patients, and that nurses cannot be expected to paper over the gaps left by management.

Concluding the inquest the Coroner, Andrew Haigh, committed to write to the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust to request written assurance from the Board that effective systems are in place to monitor the ongoing improvements at Stafford General Hospital. The Coroner also wants reassurance from the Trust that any future changes made for budgetary constraint purposes will only be done so following proper risk assessment as to patient safety.

Sarah Huntbach continued: The family were overcome with relief that they had finally had an opportunity to investigate what had happened and were able to raise the issues that were so clearly at the heart of what was neglectful practice.

It is hoped that the public inquiry due to start next month will be thorough and far-reaching and will bring relief for the many other families wanting justice for the appalling state of affairs which existed at Stafford Hospital.

The focus for the family continues to be the civil and Human Rights claims they are making on

behalf of Gillian s Grandson.

Further information is available from the Anthony Collins Solicitors Press Office. For general enquiries contact Simeon Ling on 07841 499693 or for media enquiries contact Jo Garner on 07717 897991 or 01527 888992, email [media@anthonycollins.com](mailto:media@anthonycollins.com). [www.anthonycollins.com](http://www.anthonycollins.com).  
Editor s Notes Anthony Collins Solicitors Anthony Collins Solicitors is a full service law firm with a national reputation for advising individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organisations, local authorities, and public sector bodies throughout the UK. For nearly four decades, it has been successfully combining market-leading legal expertise with a commitment to excellence and long-term relationships underpinned by a strong ethical position. Chambers UK, the leading guide to the legal industry, recently praised the firm across its broad range of practice areas, singling out an outstanding 20 leaders in their fields. Its Clinical Negligence team has also been recognised by members of the legal profession. In particular, the Legal 500 and Chambers UK guides recommend Anthony Collins Solicitors as one of the leading law firms in clinical negligence in the West Midlands. Inez Brown, Associate Solicitor, is the lead solicitor acting on behalf of the Gray family working alongside the team s two partners, Tony Hall and Rankeshwar Batta. Profiles for each of these individuals are available at <http://www.anthonycollins.com/who-we-are/our-people.aspx>.