

My name is Kim High and this is my mother's story.

This is a very difficult thing to write as I want you to know how wonderful and special my mother was, but I must keep this brief. We had many issues with the nursing facility, both administrative and those related to her care, but I am going to focus only on the instances where I believe a lack and/or shortage of care staff directly impacted her health and care.

After 50+ years of smoking, my mother was a lung cancer survivor and had chronic emphysema and COPD. She lived at home and received some assistance for every day tasks (3 hours per week), but my daughter and I did the rest. In January 2009, Mama and her doctor decided she needed nursing facility care.

I want to be clear at this point that my mother, although very ill, was still expected to live several more years with the proper care.

Mama settled in well. She was still able to get to the bathroom, but needed assistance to get to the dining room and to shower. My brother and I visited several times a week and other family and friends visited often.

Mama had a few brief hospital stays where she received intense breathing therapy. In retrospect I wonder if these early stays were due to staffing issues. Was she receiving her medications in a timely manner?

One day I get the first of many calls. Mama was being taken to the hospital as she had fallen. I rushed to the hospital and was devastated to find my mother with the entire right side of her face black and blue and right eye swollen shut. Her left eye was also blackened and right shoulder and arm severely bruised. She had gotten up to go to the bathroom, but the effort caused her to pass out and she hit the bathroom floor face first. Luckily, her roommate heard the crash and screamed for help so she was found quickly. We met with the administrators and it was decided that when Mama needed to use the bathroom, she would push her call button and an attendant would assist her and wait until she was done.

Another call, another fall, another hospital stay. Increased confusion and delirium, but when lucid, Mama said she pushed the call button to use the bathroom, but no one came. She was desperate and tried to go herself. This time they have no idea how long she was on the floor, but she was ice cold and her oxygen level was just over 60 when they found her. As falls continued, the facility promised a special mattress, but never provided it. Ultimately they put her in adult diapers, rather than provide the assistance she needed to get to the toilet.

After the first fall Mama began showing signs of confusion, forgetfulness and delirium. Her physician said it was due to Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) poisoning, common with COPD. He prescribed a bi-pap machine to be used nightly and weekly tests to check her CO<sub>2</sub> levels. We met with the administration and were told she would be taken care of.

When she got worse, I asked Mama if they had been putting her bi-pap on at nights, she said no. I was leaving to check on it with the nurse and she begged me not to "rock the boat". Odd!? This was completely out of character for my mother. I spoke with the nurse anyway and she said that Mama wouldn't let them put it on. When asked again, my mother told me they were too rough and hurt her

when they put it on and would not adjust it if it was not set correctly which caused her pain. She promised me she would cooperate and they assured me it would be applied every night. This was very short-lived. After trying for a few minutes they would just give up and then they stopped trying at all.

We visited regularly but seldom saw care staff enter the room. If we did press the call button, there is no response.

Then one Sunday, my brother and I arrived for a visit. We found Mama laying on her bed in fetal position, crying with no blankets. Her call light was on, but I don't know for how long. She had her phone in her hand because she was lucid enough to know it was Sunday when my sister usually called. Mama decided to call her, but she no longer recognized numbers and letters and was unable to do it. I called for her and while she was talking I realized something was very wrong. Her speech was slurred and nothing she said made any sense.

I went to find someone to check her CO2 levels. It was close to dinner time, everyone was busy. I finally was able to snag a person and asked her to let the nurse know we needed her. While waiting I noticed a worker in my mother's hall attending to a medicine cart. After about 20 minutes when a nurse had still not come, I went up and asked if she was the nurse and she was. I asked her to please come and test my mother's CO2 levels and said she would be there right away.

30 minutes passed and the nurse finally showed in my mother's room with the machine that measures oxygen levels which the nurse said was fine. I told her CO2 was the test needed and she responded with "I don't know anything about that. I just came on shift." An hour later she had not returned with the right equipment. As I left I passed the nurse still in the hall with the med cart, I begged her to closely monitor my mother that evening. She said they would do what they could do.

The next morning as I prepared to call the facility to request my mother's CO2 level be checked my phone rang. It was 7:55, an attendant was telling me she had found my mother non-responsive and she was on the way to the hospital. She said she held mother in her arms for the last 3 hours while they tried to revive her. I was confused by her statement, but was more concerned about Mama at the time.

Two days later Mama died. It was February 24, 2010, just barely a year after she was admitted to the nursing facility. She was only 70 years old.

We asked one of the Physical Therapists who Mama adored to be a pall bearer. On the day of her funeral he said something that completely stunned me. He said how awful it had been for him to find her like that and he was surprised they had not taken her to the hospital earlier. I told him the attendant had said she found Mama. He replied that was on Monday. On Sunday he had found Mama unresponsive.

If she had received the tests and other items prescribed for her, would she still be alive today?

I'll never know the answer. Much of the distress and some of the harm were caused by inadequate staffing, constant staff changes and poor

training. I do not hold the facility responsible for her death, that was due to her illness. However, I DO find the facility responsible for hastening the time of my mother's death. I also want you to

know that the people who directly cared for my mother were very caring and compassionate, and extremely over-worked. Under bad circumstances they did what they could do.

So, now we're asking you to do what you can do and pass this bill.

Kim High, Lawrence, KS, February 16, 2015