



Oifig an Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman

A Good Death...

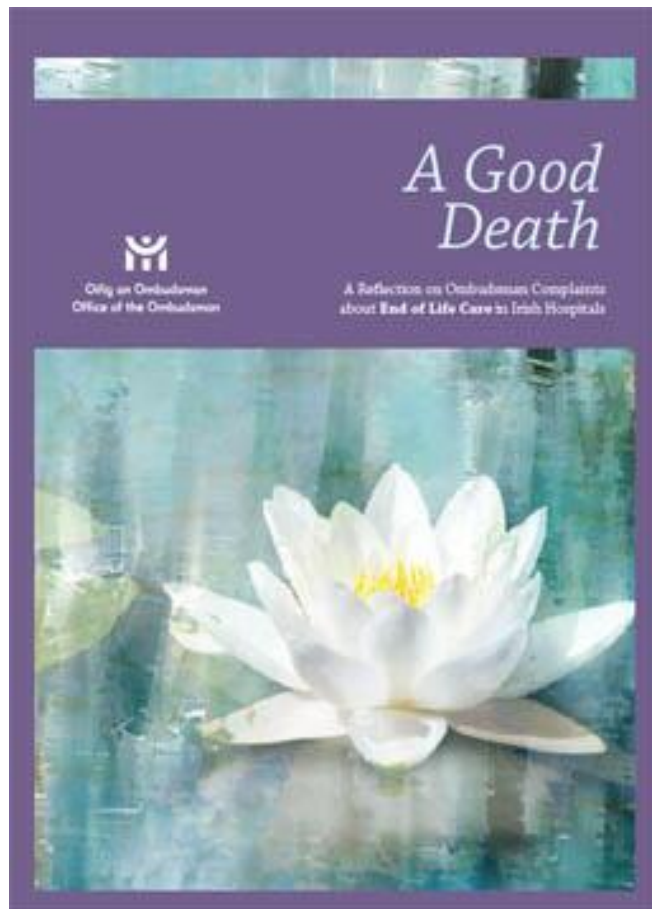
*A Reflection on Ombudsman Complaints
about End of Life Care in Irish Hospitals*

Peter Tyndall
Ombudsman



Oifig an Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman

A collection of stories and experiences.



What can we learn from them?



Oifig an Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman

DNR

- Older woman cared for “poorly” in hospital
- Family complained and sought medical records
- Family had agreed to DNR, but was not aware of “comfort measures only”
- Family believed it had caused death by medication etc. being withdrawn

Learning:

Better communication, explanations, responsibility of consultant, copies of relevant policy



Breaking bad news

- 87 yr old woman told she was dying of cancer
- No family member or nurse present
- (Family had asked Reg. not to give bad news)

Learning

- Policy on breaking bad news (how, when, who...)
- Give it time
- Respect wishes of patient, be aware of family concerns



Supporting a good death at home

- 85 year old woman discharged home 6 days before death
- No visit from PHN for first 5 days (no referral)
- Pain relieving meds not available for first 24 hrs
- No advice on care

Learning

- Actively plan and support the d/c and logistics
- Activate community resources



Duty to family?

- Information.... Patient's rights versus family regrets
- Space to grieve
- Offering condolences
- Patience and tact
- Arranging post mortems
- The remains
- The mortuary



Managing complaints

- Complaints re care before or after death are sometimes the most complex and time consuming.
- Give them time early on.
- Offer a non-threatening meeting, perhaps with an advocate present.
- Listen. Work hard not to be defensive
- Where there is learning, show strength in pursuing it



"I wanted to thank you for everything you have done over the last few years.

If it wasn't for you I would still be living uncertain of what happened, with myself and my kids re-living every thing that happened for the rest of our lives.

Every day was an emotional roller coaster.

It is like a dark cloud has been lifted. Its finally over and I can enjoy my life. I have some issues still to deal with as a result of what I went through but this is the start of my next chapter".

Complainant to complaint investigator

