

## **Multiple issues in one complaint - quality improvement**

Many complaints received by the HCSCC occur because there is a breakdown in communication between patient and family and the treating team. This is more likely to lead to a complaint if the patient is very ill and the family stressed; and what might seem minor issues are not addressed quickly and sensitively. Once there is tension in the relationship, trust is more difficult to maintain and complaints are likely to increase. The complaint outlined below is about a young woman who was brought to hospital with a severe injury, and her family who were understandably worried about her and wanting to be fully informed about current and proposed treatment.

Problems from the family's perspective started when their daughter was first admitted to hospital. She was frightened and wanted her family with her. When the family asked to stay with her overnight, they were told this was not possible. Their concerns were compounded when, over the first week, they were given conflicting information by different members of the treating team about their daughter's diagnosis and proposed treatment. On review by the HCSCC, this confusion was reflected in the patient medical record. With respect to the day to day care provided to their daughter, the family were upset that food and drinks were consistently placed out of her reach, and that nothing was done when they raised this issue with nursing staff.

The hospital responded and addressed concerns about clinical handover. One outcome from this complaint is that clinical handover now takes place with the patient present and thus allows for information to be consistently provided to patient and family as well as team members. In relation to the quality of treatment provided, the family now understands that the treating team was in constant touch with an interstate team regarding how the patient's condition should best be managed. Finally, in advising the hospital of the outcome of the complaint, the HCSCC strongly suggested that the hospital's visiting and boarder policy be reviewed. The hospital was also asked to consider improvements that could be made in relation to the issues raised in the complaint, and specifically around meals and drinks to ensure that staff communicate with the patient to ensure placement of meal trays and drinks is appropriate.