

## **Restraint of elderly person in hospital**

A complaint was received from a woman (with her mother's authority) about her elderly mother who seemed to deteriorate while being treated in hospital. During the admission, the mother's usual medication regime was changed, and she became progressively more confused. The daughter thought that the deterioration in her mother's condition was due to the medication change. Due to the complexity of practice issues, the complaint about the treating doctor was referred to the Medical Board for further investigation.

The daughter also complained that when she visited her mother early one morning, she found her lying in bed with her feet elevated and the bed rails up. Her mother had been unable to get out of bed and go to the toilet. The daughter was so upset by this that she discharged her mother from hospital believing that better care could be provided at home.

The hospital advised that there were significant concerns about the mother's safety due to her confusion, level of agitation and the risk of injury should she fall. The Commissioner decided to place this issue on the HCSCC's systemic issues register, and advise the hospital that the practice of elevating a patient's feet and raising bed rails constitutes restraint. This obligates the service to collaborate with families when managing delirium and associated behaviours; document the use of restraints including the use of rails and elevating feet; ensure the use of restraints is reviewed by a medical practitioner; and monitor the consequences of restraint use.