

To: Ken Anthony  
Chief Executive Officer  
Health South Harmarville Rehabilitation Hospital  
320 Guys Run Rd.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238

From: Sharon McGinnis

Sunday, February 21, 2010

Subject: Excellence in rehabilitation care

My 90 year old mother fell down the steps in her home in December and had to be rushed to emergency care in Johnstown, PA, on December 26. Her first week at Conemaugh was hectic, but predictable. Her second week there was a complete waste of her recovery time and insurance payments. She was dumped on the stroke floor with incontinent, unaware patients and I was told that was the best that could be done for her.

On her first day on the stroke ward, I began to advocate for her to be sent to Harmarville's brain trauma unit. The social worker at Conemaugh tried to tell me that she had never heard of your facility and then tried to direct me to facilities financially linked to their health system. My mother barely moved out of bed while I contacted your facility, had your Cambria County Office review her records, and immediately received acceptance to move her. Your facility accepted her immediately but it took me 5 days to convince Conemaugh that I was firm on this plan that my mother was not going to lay in a stroke unit when she could be helped with appropriate rehabilitation.

I am so glad that I remained firm and kept pushing for better care. Mum arrived on a Saturday. She was disoriented from being in bed all week, she was weak from no movement, and she had regained no speech. As she is legally blind and wears two hearing aids, it was unacceptable that she not have a chance to regain as much independence as possible. Before her fall, she was living entirely on her own with the ability to call me for any emergencies.

After 3 weeks with your staff, mum made major progress with her walking, stair climbing, personal care, mental health, and her ability to speak. Your staff worked a miracle--every department at Harmarville worked hard with my mother, physically and mentally. Please pass on my thanks to everyone involved in her care. A special thanks to her case manager, Carla Wray who spent time with me because I needed support. She helped me so much and arranged for my mother to transfer to her choice of nursing home, The Bethlen Homes in Ligonier. Mum will move this week to another step-down level to the Bethlen Home Assisted Care Building. None of this would have been possible without Health South. Your facility did not assume that a 90 year old woman would be frail and unable to resume an almost normal life after such a devastating concussion. Health South accepted her where she was and brought her back to her felsty, if a little slower, existence.

We are in a very rural part of Westmoreland County, but all of my neighbors, friends, and relatives had heard about the wonderful things Harmarville had done for over thirty years. Now, they have a first-hand account of what your staff can do because they see my mother's progress. Why Conemaugh would ignore your specialized service is beyond my comprehension. People are living longer and longer and expectations for good quality of life over 100 years is going to be more common. Each person should have the right and the ability to live those years at their maximum independence level.

I am sending a copy of this to the CEO at Conemaugh Hospital System with some hope that future patients there will be processed better and sent to appropriate care—a little research by their social work staff with encouragement by their administrative officers could change the life of the elderly in our geographic area profoundly.