

March 6, 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Patricia Olthoff-Blank. I am from Shell Rock Iowa. I want to thank you for allowing me to present testimony this morning on this very important issue. It is personal to me because my mother Virginia Olthoff died as the result of neglect at a nursing home where she had lived for nearly 15 years. As a matter of fact, today marks the one year and one day anniversary of her funeral.

One of the most frustrating parts about how she died is that during her 15 years at Timely Mission Nursing Home in Buffalo Center, Iowa, my family believed she was getting good care. Each time we visited, she seemed comfortable, was dressed in regular clothes not pajamas and seemed to be clean and well groomed. We were familiar with many of the staff including the director of nursing who went to high school with me and my brothers.

There had always been good communication from the staff between my father who lived just three blocks from the facility until his death in 2012 and me as the eldest child and only daughter.

After my father's death, I became the family member responsible for decisions and the administrators called if there were needs. And they called often which I appreciated.

Your mom needs new glasses, she could use a haircut, she needs her toenails trimmed, and she could use some new underwear.

They also contacted me and discussed each time her medication was altered, she had dementia but she communicated with the staff and with us. Although she often just thought we were some nice people who came to visit. I was always invited to attend her yearly evaluation which I did not attend because I live two and a half hours away and it was conducted during the week. But the staff always was available to discuss the report over the phone.

Fast forward to February 28th, 2018 at 3am, I received a phone call from the overnight Registered Nurse who told me simply "Your mother is moaning." And she asked me what do you want me to do? "I said, "Give her something for pain."

And the nurse said, "All we can give her is Tylenol," and she asked me again, "What you want me to do?" I said, "I think she needs to go to the hospital." She said ok and hung up.

The next call I got was from an emergency room nurse at a hospital in Mason City who said I had better come quickly because she was not sure my mother would be alive in the hour or so that it would take me to get there.

My husband, brother and I were greeted by the Emergency Room doctor who said my mother was extremely dehydrated and had sodium levels that were so elevated that she likely had suffered a stroke. He also said quote" this did not just happen." "I believe she has been without water or any type of fluid for at least 4 or 5 days." He also told us he is a mandatory abuse reporter and he was going to report this. (I heard the doctor say this but I wasn't sure what it meant because I was so surprised that she was this ill and was likely going to die soon).

My mother was given morphine for extreme pain, and we transferred her back to Timely Mission where she passed away a few hours later.

We held her funeral on March 5th and found it odd that no one from the nursing home where she had lived for 15 years attended the funeral. The church is just four blocks away. The director of nursing sent a beautiful bouquet of roses, but we received no sympathy cards from anyone on the staff which is unusual in a small town. Many of them knew my mother before she developed dementia and often told me stories about her when I would come to visit.

After the funeral, I went on my life grieving my mother especially in April because we shared a birthday, It was my first one without her, She would have been 88.

In July, I got a phone call from Clark Kauffman, a reporter for the Des Moines Register who said he was sorry for my mother's death and wanted to know if I had any comments about a Department of Inspections and Appeals Report.

I had no idea what he was talking about but remembered what the emergency room doctor had said so it was now making sense.

The report read like a horror story. According to numerous staff members, my mother had been eating very little and drinking almost nothing for almost 2

weeks. Where was my call? The report also said she had been crying out in pain often, where was my phone call?

She did have a Do Not Resuscitate order but she wasn't having breathing or cardiac issues. The DNR states that she is to be made comfortable with an IV for fluids, oxygen and morphine or something for pain. NONE of that happened. The DIA report also mentioned her doctor who noted that my mother had lost a considerable amount of weight. Again where was my phone call?

The DIA report also showed that there were several certified nursing assistants who frequently notified their supervisors of my mother's condition but nothing was done.

I want to thank the CNAs , nurses and others who work in care facilities and do their jobs right. The facilities are often under staffed and these people work for much less money than they should be paid. Please thank those people if you have a loved one in nursing care. I also want to thank the Emergency Room doctor who reported the neglect and I especially want to thank Clark Kauffman and other journalists who take time to read these lengthy reports and write stories about these inspections, so perhaps something can be done about the current situation. I have more ideas that I will address in the comment section if there is time.

Thank-you