

Friday 8 September 2023

Patients' right to a second medical opinion

Sir, You refer in your leading article to avoidable deaths in hospital, and “the instinct to cover up”. The distress of the death can be compounded by its aftermath. My daughter Gaia died aged 25 of an unexplained brain condition shortly after admission to hospital. Her death was the subject of an inquest and the coroner ordered the hospital to ensure the attendance of such medical witnesses to give oral evidence as were “best able to assist”. There were no independent clinical witnesses. The hospital successfully opposed my request for an independent neurologist for an unexplained brain death. One can speculate on the hospital’s reasons for its choice of witnesses but the court’s conclusion was that the cause of death was “unclear”. The investigation was uninformed and uninformative — but perhaps a convenient outcome?

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