

Pastoral care whilst in Hospital

Whilst we never like the idea of being admitted to hospital, we recognise the incredible care provided by hospital staff, and the significant pressures that are placed on our Health Service.

As part of an improvement programme in Northern Ireland, a new electronic patient care system is being rolled out nationally (known as Encompass). This has already happened in the South Eastern and Belfast Trusts, and will go live in the Northern Trust on 7th November. The impact of this will mean all patient notes, charts, x-rays, scans etc will be electronic and there will be a significant reduction in paper. It will also mean in the future that patients will be able to review results of tests, appointments etc online.

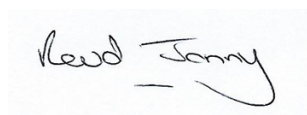
The Church of Ireland provides pastoral care to patients in all hospitals, and usually a Church of Ireland chaplain will visit patients once admitted, providing pastoral care and also connecting with their local minister if permitted. However there are issues that sometimes prevent this from happening :

- Some hospital staff may not record details of a patient's religious information or their wish to see a chaplain. This legitimately could be because when the patient arrives in hospital their medical needs are the priority ;
- Also a patient's family may not always contact their minister to inform them they are in hospital, sometimes because of the obvious pressures the family may be feeling while a loved one is unwell.

With the introduction of the new electronic patient system, the chaplains are finding that it is more difficult to identify patients who want to see a minister, as the patients are not being asked regularly if they would like someone to call with them. If for example the patient does not have any immediate family, this may mean that they never get to see their minister. Also the chaplain's role can be very important, as sometimes family or ministers may not be permitted to visit a patient if there are infection risks in the ward e.g. COVID.

Therefore can I encourage you that when a parishioner is admitted to hospital, that you let me know. Also if someone can ask the ward staff to make a referral to the chaplaincy team (now known as a Spiritual Consult), this will ensure that the Chaplains can call and provide pastoral care.

If you have any questions, please get in touch



Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth

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