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3.10 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the standard of treatment which stroke patients receive at Overdale:

Given the Minister's indication that she takes patient complaints seriously, is she satisfied with the standard of treatment which stroke patients receive at Overdale and, if not, will she instigate an immediate independent review of treatment and procedures at that facility?

The Bailiff:

Assistant Minister, I understand you are going to answer this question?

Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

Yes, Sir, thank you. I can assure Deputy Baudains the Minister for Health and Social Services and all the staff do take all complaints very seriously. Samarès Ward at Overdale is a 20-bedded in-patient facility providing care and rehabilitation to patients with a variety of physical and emotional needs, including those who have had a stroke. Over 200 patients are admitted to Samarès Ward each year. In the past year Health and Social Services has received just one complaint concerning the standard of care on Samarès Ward and the Minister herself, along with her officers, attended on that complainant. I am sure that Deputy Baudains will be pleased to hear that as part of Health and Social Services commitment to improving services the department will be taking part in a National Sentinel Stroke Audit which measures the quality of stroke care and the quality of stroke service organisation during October of this year. This demonstrates that Health and Social Services staff at Overdale are totally committed to supporting patients and to continuous improvement of stroke management on the Island, are very competent in their skills, expertise and dedication in caring for stroke patients.

3.10.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Is the Assistant Minister aware that with regard to stroke patients that the consultant rarely visits the patients and is rarely to be seen, that inappropriate medication is given, that physiotherapy that is so important for the recovery of patients is virtually non-existent, full bottles of urine are left in patients' rooms, and these are not the complaints of a single person or one patient. It is normal procedure. Would the Assistant Minister not agree that the attitude that appears to prevail of: "You are not going to get any better so we will not bother" is completely unacceptable?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Stroke patients admitted for rehabilitation are cared for by a residential and multi-disciplinary team and have access to gym facilities and re-enablement equipment as part of their programme.

[11:00]

The multi-disciplinary team consists of 2 consultants, one part-time junior doctor, ward sisters, staff nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists, healthcare assistants and other allied visiting health professionals and therapists. I do not see evidence that there is a lack of services and facilities being provided to patients at Samarès Ward.

3.10.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Given the very serious allegations made by Deputy Baudains, the Assistant Minister has read out a series of services but what he has not covered is the manner in which the services are delivered. Would he in order to safeguard staff morale, and to answer Deputy Baudains' allegations, would he set in motion a proper inquiry into the workings of that unit so that all sides can be informed of what is really going on, as we are now faced as a House with some very serious allegations.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Yes, and certainly I would just repeat that we are taking part in the National Sentinel Stroke Audit, this October, which will go into all items of care. Furthermore, we do not rely just on complaints. We also have the listening post. This is the brochure available in every Parish Hall, I am holding up for Members to see, which tells people if they have any concerns or wish to say anything it gives all the procedures which they can do to let us know exactly what is going on so we can look and improve at all times. It includes visitors that go on to the wards to speak to patients and speak to them confidentially or taken written submissions which aid us in improving the service that we deliver up at the Samarès Ward.

3.10.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Just on a supplementary: could the Assistant Minister confirm that there will be proactive steps taken so that vulnerable patients who often are unwilling to express their views for obvious reasons... that those views will form an integral part of the report?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Yes, we certainly shall do.

3.10.4 The Connétable of St. John:

Procedures at Overdale in the Samarès Ward can vary. I recall at 7.00 p.m. in October a year or so ago a stroke patient coming to the door of his room and asking for a bed bottle. The reply he got from the lady at the desk was: "You know the rules, during the daytime you walk to the toilet." I was observing this and I was taken aback. The poor chap obviously felt somewhat embarrassed and he said: "But, nurse, I cannot walk that far again." The reply he got: "Was go in your room and I will bring you one shortly." The whole manner in which this elderly gentlemen was being dealt with left a bad taste in my mouth, a very bad taste, and I thought it is wrong when somebody is there for rehabilitation and he gave them the reason but then she went on to say, and he was not rude: "Do not talk to me in that manner again. I do not like being spoken to like that" and he had not raised his voice or anything. He was a very elderly man and it did leave a bad taste. Does the Minister think that is the way to treat our elderly sick people?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

That is certainly a very distressing story that the Constable of St. John has just painted for us, and certainly I do not think any Member of this Assembly, nor the Minister, nor myself, would be happy to say that is normal service that is given up at Samarès. Obviously we cannot talk about individual cases but if that is the situation we certainly would want to take that on board and look into that. If that did happen then on behalf of the Minister I would like to apologise to that particular patient, that is not what we do in Health and Social Services.

3.10.5 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I think it is sad that the Assistant Minister is not aware or does not seem to be aware of what is happening at that facility. What I would ask him is he has told us an audit is going to be undertaken. Could he confirm that that will be independent because we all know that people cannot investigate themselves and given the seriousness of the problem there, in my view we need an independent review of the situation? Is that what the Assistant Minister is suggesting?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Two part question there. Certainly I am aware of things going on at Samarès Ward. I have parishioners there who I visit. I have past friends who have come out of there for stroke rehabilitation, and a current friend who is still there. Yes, I do know what goes on in Samarès Ward. Yes, I do know the treatment they are getting in there and all of those people I have just mentioned have all been relatively complimentary. Yes, on occasions there are things that do not happen as quickly as they wish them to, but they are overall very content with treatment. Also, yes, that the National Sentinel Stroke Audit will be independent.

The Bailiff:

That concludes oral questions on notice. We now come to questions without notice and the first period is to the Minister for External Relations.