

**MRS IVANKA PAVLINOVICH**

*Statement*

**HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (North Metropolitan)** [5.21 pm]: On a number of occasions I have raised issues to do with Mrs Ivanka Pavlinovich. Unfortunately, I have been advised that no information can be provided to me on this; however, I want comment on her case on the public record. I am particularly concerned about the lack of the duty of care given to this patient. I am concerned about the increasing number of adverse events in Western Australian hospitals under this government.

In late October 2009, Mrs Pavlinovich, who is a diabetic, slipped whilst working as a cleaner at Guildford Grammar School. Since her initial consultation, Mrs Pavlinovich presented at Swan District Hospital several times until 5 November. Mrs Pavlinovich's health deteriorated when she was taken back to Swan District Hospital with a temperature of 39.8 degrees, complaining of tightness above the left breast, and sweating profusely. On 8 November, her son Steve went to visit her and she was unable to recognise him. Her husband and daughter Vesna were notified that they should attend Swan District Hospital for a meeting to discuss Mrs Pavlinovich's diagnosis and current condition. Dr Brand spoke to Mr Pavlinovich and Vesna. The doctor was waiting for someone to come and open the computerised axial tomography scan location, this took 45 minutes and he thought it would confirm his suspicions that it was a flesh-eating bug. The doctor confirmed that part of her bowel had been eaten by this bug and Mrs Pavlinovich had faeces floating in her stomach. This could also explain why she was having lung trouble. The family were told that she was gravely ill, probably would not make Christmas and must be sent to Royal Perth Hospital to remove part of her bowel. She was placed in an induced coma.

When asked about the prognosis, Dr Brand replied to the family that their mother would probably die, and that their mother must have had—this is what Dr Brand said—this disease lingering in her body. The family were staggered that the doctor told them she had been born with this disease, and her daughter Vesna replied she had had three children and that the proposition seemed ludicrous. The doctor said that they would know in three days where they stood with respect to their mother's health. Mrs Pavlinovich was subsequently transferred to Royal Perth Hospital for bowel surgery, where the family were allowed to see her before the surgery. They were told she would be sent to intensive care post-surgery. The medical team advised that it would let the family know what they were dealing with after surgery. The surgery took approximately two hours; a part of Mrs Pavlinovich's bowel was removed and she was left with a colostomy bag. This all resulted from a sprained ankle.

The family met with the head surgeon and he asked how it happened, when it happened and how she got to be in the state that she was in medically. He asked how long she had been like that. The surgeon wanted the orthopaedic surgeon to look at Mrs Pavlinovich's leg, which was still in a moon boot. He asked if anyone had looked at her leg. The family had no idea whether that had happened or not. Swan District Hospital had been more concerned about Mrs Pavlinovich's lungs than her leg. The orthopaedic surgeon opened the boot and the smell was absolutely putrid. He instructed that no-one touch Mrs Pavlinovich and told the family that it was what they call gangrene. The family asked if he had ever seen anything like this and he said that he had only ever seen four patients like it and all had died. He said this bug goes through the whole body; that her body was in shutdown and she needed a full-body scan.

The doctors advised the family that Mrs Pavlinovich would need to undergo surgery to amputate her foot. Doctors completed that surgery by amputating the leg below the knee, because the gangrene had already started to work its way up the leg. Mr Pavlinovich had to sign consent, because, as she is a diabetic, they would prefer amputation. On 9 November Mrs Pavlinovich underwent a magnetic resonance imaging scan, which indicated that the staph infection had eaten her spine. Luckily, her heart and brain had not been affected, but certainly her spine was. Her lungs were affected. Her back was fractured, which was put down to either a previous injury that had flared up—that was one possible explanation—or, apparently, when bones do not get oxygen it can happen. Or perhaps her back may have been twisted. Once again, keep in mind that she came in only with a fractured foot, and this is where she is at now.

Mrs Pavlinovich was in an induced coma for 14 days while the doctors tried antibiotics. However, her body did not accept them. The doctors tried one last antibiotic and they pumped her with it. It confirmed that it was a staph flesh-eating bug infection, which had attacked her vital organs. It confirmed that it had attacked lumbar 1 in her spine.

Mrs Pavlinovich was in Royal Perth Hospital for three months and transferred to Royal Perth Rehabilitation Hospital for rehab in February 2010. Although trying to do exercise, she kept complaining about severe back pain and she was continually having scans. It took three months to get everyone on the same page, and Mrs Pavlinovich subsequently had spinal surgery in March 2010, with specially made rods and pins for her spine.

Since the spinal surgery Mrs Pavlinovich has been in constant rehab. She has had successful further bowel surgery to reverse the previous surgery that resulted in Mrs Pavlinovich wearing a colostomy bag, allowing Mrs Pavlinovich to have full-body function again.

Mrs Pavlinovich now has a Zimmer frame and a prosthetic leg and suffers from time to time with ulcers on the stump. Mrs Pavlinovich is still under the care of the infectious diseases and amputee clinic. It is clearly not good enough and a very poor reflection on the public —

**The PRESIDENT:** Order member! From previous questions, I seem to recall that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich indicated that legal action may be pending in this situation. I have listened very carefully and you have run through a chronology of events, which is fine. Standing order 51 refers to sub judice matters. If that is the case, I caution you at this stage about drawing any further conclusions because of that standing order.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will complete my remarks by saying that this is very disappointing. It certainly requires some investigation by the Minister for Health in terms of how it can be, in this day and age, that somebody with a sprained ankle can have this amount of damage done to their body.