



PRESS RELEASE

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St Bernard's Hospital: GHA clarifies media reports on delays at A&E

The Gibraltar Health Authority denies a media report that a local 93-year-old woman had to wait four and a half hours to see a doctor at the A&E Department in St Bernard's Hospital. Although the article does not give precise details of the case, the GHA is confident that it has identified the patient concerned.

The GHA can therefore confirm that, on arrival at A&E just after 13.00hrs, (timings from official hospital records), the lady in question was attended to immediately and without a wait. She was placed in a proper bed in an observation cubicle, where the full nursing triage, ECG and blood tests, were performed within minutes.

The lady in question was immediately treated with intravenous fluids and was in a stable condition, not complaining of any pain or disorientation whilst waiting for the results of tests.

The GHA spokesman stressed that patients at the A&E department are triaged by nursing staff according to medical priority and this lady's condition was not life threatening.

She was seen by an A&E doctor at 16.40hrs, (official hospital timing), some three and a half hours after admission, (admittedly still a lengthy period of time), and when the result of all tests were available.

The doctor discharged this lady after a further review at 18.45hrs (official hospital timing).

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, said: "We have investigated the newspaper claim and are confident that the elderly lady in question received the appropriate treatment despite having to wait to see a doctor. She was immediately placed in an A&E observation room and was resting in bed while she received attention, with preliminary medical tests being conducted straight away. From the moment the patient arrived, the excellent A&E staff made every effort to ensure that she was kept comfortable and medically



monitored. She was seen by the doctor when the results of the full array of test carried out was available. The fact that she was discharged later that evening corroborates that her case was not as time critical as others which presented at the same time. This elderly lady was at all times accompanied by her family. The A&E Department is extremely busy and its brilliant staff deal with numerous cases, some of which are greater emergencies than others and require the most urgent attention. Clearly, these take precedence over those that are less urgent, always according to medical criteria. Unfortunately, therefore, there may be a degree of delay in some instances. We will nonetheless continue to strive reduce waiting times, by rolling out continuing reforms and ensure that the service we provide to the community keeps improving. We are also all well aware that some people – not in this case - report to A&E for problems that are neither “accidents” nor “emergencies”. We believe that the substantive improvements at the Primary Care Centre to be announced imminently, in addition to the recently introduced repeat prescription service, will encourage people with more minor ailments to report to the PCC rather than to A&E. This will have the result of further reducing waiting times in A&E. Finally, it is common knowledge that I have encouraged anyone who was kept waiting for more than 90 minutes in A&E to contact me. Since I made that offer, three patients have made contact with me, investigated their cases and A & E already replied to all of them. I continue to encourage our community in such situations to get in touch with me.”