

**Waiting time for CT scan for patient with  
symptomatic cerebral aneurysm  
(07HDC11036, 1 July 2008)**

*Neurosurgeon ~ Public hospital ~ District health board ~ Standard of care ~  
Provision of information ~ Strike ~ Rights 4(1), 6(1)(c), 6(1)(e)*

A 67-year-old woman was diagnosed at a public hospital as having a cerebral aneurysm. She was referred to a neurosurgeon, who informed her about her condition and her treatment options. The neurosurgeon told the woman that the aneurysm was unlikely to rupture. A semi-urgent CT cerebral angiogram was ordered. The hospital's semi-urgent radiology waiting list at that time was four to six weeks. The woman was anxious to progress her treatment and telephoned a number of times to enquire about her appointment. She waited 38 days for a confirmed appointment three days later, only to have it postponed for three weeks because of a strike. The woman was found dead at home before the revised appointment date.

It was held that the neurosurgeon did not respond with sufficient urgency to a serious problem. She did not act with reasonable care and skill, and accordingly breached Right 4(1).

It was also held that the communication with the woman about her appointment was substandard. In failing to provide her with adequate, timely information about her awaited CT angiogram, the DHB breached Rights 6(1)(c) and 6(1)(e).

This case is evidence of the potential harm to which patients are inevitably exposed during strikes by health professionals.