

Sharing Gina's story

A catastrophic string of failures at Doncaster Royal Infirmary in 2013 led to a patient, called Gina, losing her leg after being accidentally injected with a clinical disinfectant. The hospital was determined to learn from the incident and to do whatever it could to prevent such an event from happening again.

Dr Lee Cutler, Consultant Nurse in Critical Care explained: "As part of our investigation into what went wrong, we recreated the incident using simulation and role play. We also decided to create a video of the incident, with the full permission of Gina... We spent many hours together and tears were shed on both sides."

The video proved an invaluable learning tool that has enabled the lessons from Gina's story to be shared both within and outside the hospital. The doctor who injected Gina has met with her and her husband, Tom, and the nurse who was involved in the incident has been able to return to work after coming to terms with the events.

The hospital admitted that it was challenging to release the video onto YouTube. Lee said: "We wanted to be open and honest about what had happened and for the learning to be disseminated as widely as possible but we were fearful of the media's reaction to what we were sharing. We didn't pull our punches, the film told the whole story in every detail."

Despite its misgivings about sharing its failures so honestly, the hospital believes it was the right thing to do. Lee added: "Your relationship with the patient and family is key to what happens after a serious untoward incident and this is determined by the culture of your organisation. I believe an adversarial culture would not have shared Gina's story and probably would not have benefited from the positive relationship that we now have with Gina and Tom, or the opportunities for learning that have arisen through this experience. Gina's story has changed our culture and leadership. People now have a better understanding of how human factors, unsafe systems and culture can impact on patient safety."

"Please learn from this, it must not happen again"

Gina

Since releasing the video of Gina's story into the public domain it has been shown to directors of nursing at regional and Trust level and is now built into Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital's human factors training. Gina's story has been viewed on YouTube more than 15,000 times.

We heard, too, that staff would like a platform to share their own experiences for learning purposes. One of the experts interviewed by the Commission suggested that a lack of protected space for staff to discuss incidents, express concerns and ask questions, hinders progress on patient safety. We heard that the hierarchy within organisations, for example where the doctors voice was listened to but other members of the team were not, was an important risk to open and honest discussions about patient safety.

HEE has an important role to play in ensuring that any learning about education and training is shared so that it can act as a catalyst for change and improvement in patient safety.