

My 90 year-old Aunt recently died in the care home where she had been living for the past five years. I was her next of kin and held Power of Attorney for her, a responsibility complicated by the fact that my Aunt lived in England and I live in Australia.

Most of her affairs could be managed with the use of modern technology and annual visits to the UK. But it was between these visits that I felt frustrated when trying to gauge how my Aunt was actually feeling, whether she had any medical problems and how they were being handled. Speaking with her on the phone was sometimes difficult because she could not always hear me clearly and when she wasn't well she could be a bit confused.

When I spoke to staff members at the care home, they could mostly only give me a general picture of my Aunt's state of health. When I was particularly concerned I phoned my Aunt's surgery. This was helpful but I couldn't always contact a doctor who had seen my Aunt recently. It was during one such call when Dr. Hannan spoke to me about the 'records access'.

My Aunt was enthusiastic for me to have the access and it was quickly set up. What a boon this turned out to be. Now I could get complete and current medical information. I could see what problems or symptoms had prompted the doctor being called, what the results of the examination were and what had been prescribed or recommended.

The back history, referrals, results of hospital visits and tests was also valuable information and enabled me to ask more relevant questions, by phone or by email. I also believe that as a result of my overt interest in my Aunt's health, through 'records access', my Aunt got more regular and thorough attention. The staff at the care home were also more forthcoming in accurately describing what was happening. All this information meant that as my Aunt was declining in her final weeks I was kept in the picture, almost day-by-day as the end approached. It's unfortunate that we, my Aunt and I, only had the benefit of 'records access' for such a short time, but I am very grateful for having had the opportunity to participate in it.

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**Niece (from Australia) of Deceased patient who was
a patient of Haughton Thornley Medical Centres**
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