

Family History

Mrs Sarah Lloyd is a 38 year old married woman with 2 children, 1 boy aged 13 and a 7 year old daughter.

She is employed as a Personal Assistant to the Business Manager of a large Public Relations Consultancy firm and travels with him extensively throughout Europe and America. She regularly assists him in organising the hospitality for multinational meetings.

Medical History

Mrs Lloyd visited her GP for her annual check up. The GP found a lump in her left breast on routine examination. Her Mother and Aunt had died from breast cancer, so her GP referred her to the Consultant Breast Surgeon at the local hospital, who then arranged for her to be admitted for a breast biopsy.

You meet Mrs Lloyd for the first time when she attends theatre for her surgery. The biopsy was taken and the Surgeon commented that it looked malignant and if so Mrs Lloyd would need further surgery, probably a mastectomy and axillary clearance with reconstructive surgery at a later date. The Surgeon requested for the biopsy to be reported on urgently and arranged to see Mrs Lloyd in the clinic later the same week with her husband.

The histology report confirmed the diagnosis and the patient was advised that due to her family history of breast cancer a mastectomy would be the best treatment. The surgical procedure and the postoperative care were explained to Mrs Lloyd and she appeared positive that she was going to have the surgery and beat cancer.

The patient returned home and was readmitted 4 days later and was visited by the breast care nurse who informed her about the prosthesis she would wear post operatively until reconstruction surgery could be performed.

Routine ECG, chest x-ray and blood results were all within normal limits and she was passed fit to undergo surgery.

Mrs Lloyd's surgery was to be performed as an urgent case on the morning operating list. All her details were checked in the reception area and she appeared to be coping well.

Mrs Lloyd was then taken to the Anaesthetic room and she then informed the Anaesthetist and the Surgeon that she withdrew her consent for the operation. The Surgeon took time to try and convince the patient that this was a life threatening condition and a lot of resources had been set aside to fit her in at short notice. Mrs Lloyd would not be persuaded so she returned to the ward.

She was visited later by the Surgeon on the ward but still withdrew her consent for the operation and therefore discharged herself from hospital. The reason she gave was that she could not cope with a mastectomy and it would not be a cure anyway.

Her Mother and Aunt had both undergone radical surgery and chemotherapy, which she nursed them through and she was not going to put her family through that trauma. Her husband was not present during this discussion.

18 months later the Surgeon informs you that he has to attend a Court Hearing as he is being sued for medical negligence. Mrs Lloyd had died and her husband has found out that 2 doctors could have consented for the operation, as she was obviously not in the right frame of mind to choose for herself. The theatre team are asked to be present at the hearing and may need to give evidence about Mrs Lloyd's care in the theatre.