

Norine Cameron, age 92, of Concord Township did not deserve to die alone. But that's exactly what happened on Sunday, November 22, 2020.

My Mom (Norine) went into a Long-Term Care facility in February of 2019. Between my sister and I, Mom had a family visitor to assist her every day. All that changed on March 10, 2020. That's the date that the nursing home shut its doors to family. At First, Mom had a good attitude thinking that it would not be too long before we could be with her again. That began to change within a month.

Prior to the lockdown, a family member was with Mom for a least one meal a day. Having us there encouraged her to eat. By the end of April, with no family contact, Mom was refusing to eat. The Doctor said Mom was suffering from failure to thrive and suggested we try putting her on anti-depressants to stimulate her appetite. We agreed and she bounced back and stated to eat small quantities. Drinking enough liquids was another issue. Without family there to be sure she had a fresh glass of water; she didn't take in enough liquids. The result was numerous Urinary Tract Infections.

Mom was in Physical Therapy (PT) to keep her strength up. I had been cleared by PT to walk her daily when I visited. With me not there to walk her, she sat in her wheelchair. Her legs became weak and that resulted in several falls. Two of the falls were serious enough to send her to the ER for stitches.

In July, when the Governor permitted outdoor visits, Mom was thrilled. She loved to sit outside for hours with the sun on her back. We had a total of six outdoor visits as they were very weather dependent. Because we couldn't take Mom out like we used to, she sat in her room most of the summer, not allowed to even open the window for fresh air. That took a toll on her not only physically, but psychologically.

In September when the new Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services guidelines came out, I asked if my sister and I could be Compassionate Care Givers. The facility would not allow that because Mom was still able to be wheeled out for Outdoor visits. I also inquired about starting Hospice services for Mom as that would allow us to visit, or so I thought. At that point, visits were still only allowed at "end of life".

One of Mom's serious falls occurred in September. She was taken to the ER for stitches. The Hospital ended up admitting her for five days to get her Heart Failure under control. I was able to visit with her in the hospital in person. It's sad that I was thrilled my Mom was in the hospital.

In October, indoor visits started. Those didn't last long because of the increase in COVID cases in Lake County and in the nursing home.

On November 4th, I received a call from the nursing home that my Mom tested positive for COVID. She had no symptoms. She was moved from her room to the isolation wing. The only personal item she could take was her cell phone so we could stay in touch. She never developed any symptoms from the COVID, but while in the isolation wing, she had another serious fall. She was sent to the ER and received stitches. On November 18th, she tested negative for COVID

and was moved back to the regular room. During a window visit, I could see a major decline in her as she had stopped wanting to eat and drink again. She was refusing her meds as well. The Doctor in the nursing home finally signed an order for Hospice. Hospice was to come in and do an assessment on Mom on Sunday November 22nd. Then Mom would be moved and we could finally start Compassionate Care Visits. Mom passed at 4:30 AM that morning. My sister and I were allowed in to say our final goodbyes after she passed.

The ban on nursing home visits is not keeping COVID out of the facilities. The only thing being kept out is families. Families that are so desperately needed by the elderly. Several other States have enacted the Essential Family Caregiver Act. I am pleading with Ohio to adopt House Bill 770. It's too late for my Mom. Don't let it be too late for anyone else.

Thank you,

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