



## A note from a colleague

My daughter is dying, courtesy of a brain tumour provided by her breast cancer. She is not that old. Her young grandchildren will grow up without her. She went early with her concerns. It was over four months before she got to the top of the mammogram list. The report was normal tissue. Her back pain a few weeks later was treated with six weeks physio, before a spinal x-ray showed two collapsed vertebrae. A few weeks later, her MRI was reported as erosions due to non-specific trauma. She persisted in asking for a surgical referral, and his biopsy finally gave the correct diagnosis.

The oncologist has been superb, in empathy as well as a variety of therapies, but he got a hospital pass with this one. I'm retired now, but am still proud and grateful to belong to a skilled and caring profession. But - three of my colleagues, in different disciplines, made serious errors of judgment in this case. I'm fiercely proud of the ethics and training of our profession, but somehow I feel betrayed by this family experience. I have to ask the question - how often is this occurring in this stressed-out health system? Do we GP's have the time and energy to challenge technical reports when they don't quite gel with our clinical suspicions? Through the cacophony of phones and computer screens, do we still allow time to hear the voice of the patient?

In my book, three professional errors is not just bad luck, but a symptom that needs to be sorted out.

*Name withheld by request*

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