



Communication Disabilities Access Canada

May 4, 2020

Jake Tran
President and CEO
Toronto Grace Health Centre
C/o The Salvation Army
650 Church Street
Toronto, ON M4Y 2G5

Dear Mr. Tran,

In a recent article published in the Toronto Sun, May 1, 2020, we learned about Mr. Jutcovich, a patient at Toronto Grace Hospital who cannot speak and relies on family members to interpret his communication and relay his needs to his healthcare providers. We understand from the article, that due to the current Covid-19 isolation protocol, Mr. Jutcovich's family members are restricted from being physically present and they have set up a remote tablet to interpret his communication signals and relay his needs to nursing staff. The tablet also provides Mr. Jutcovich with access to internet connections with his family, reading, music and movies. From the article, it appears that the Toronto Grace Hospital considers Mr. Jutcovich's tablet to be a surveillance camera for monitoring his care and has denied him access to his tablet for more than an hour each day.

As a national, non-profit organization that addresses accessibility issues for people who have disabilities that affect communication, CDAC recognizes Mr. Jutcovich's rights to use his tablet as an essential communication accommodation that is required under the duty to accommodate human rights legislation.

From the article, it appears that Mr. Jutcovich needs this technology because he:

- Has extensive, unique, physical and complex care and healthcare issues that need to be communicated on an on-going basis to nursing and medical staff.
- Cannot speak or independently communicate with his healthcare providers.
- Communicates using atypical and subtle eye signals that are not easily interpreted by unfamiliar nursing and healthcare providers.
- Relies on familiar family members to interpret his communication signals and communicate on his behalf.

In order to support Mr. Jutcovich to exercise his legal rights to effective communication supports when in hospital, we recommend that the hospital:

- Create an exemption to the current Covid-19 isolation protocol to allow his communication support persons to be physically present in order to assist him communicating with healthcare providers to the greatest extent possible.
- Provide his communication support persons with appropriate safety PPE and precautions.
- Ensure that Mr. Jutovich has access to his tablet at all times, especially when his communication support persons are not physically present with him.
- Allow remote control access by the family to operate Mr. Jutovich's tablet with his permission.
- Explore ways to address any privacy concerns, including those suggested by the family, such as turning off the tablet or putting it away during services.
- Re-frame the understanding of his tablet not as a surveillance camera, but as an essential communication aid, in addition to having similar functions that other patients might use on their smart phones.
- Recognize that family members are essential support services for patients who have significant communication disabilities and can contribute valuable support to the patient and his healthcare providers.
- If requested by Mr. Jutovich and family, refer to a Speech-Language Pathologist to assess and provide appropriate augmentative and alternative communication supports.

It is our experience over the past 20 years that the medical field has limited exposure to the range of technologies and supports that are used by people who have significant communication disabilities. It is our hope that Toronto Grace Hospital will show leadership in recognizing the communication accommodation needs of Mr. Jutovich and of others to follow.

Yours sincerely,



Barbara Collier, Reg. CASLPO. F. ISAAC
Executive Director
Communication Disabilities Access Canada
www.cdacanada.com

Email: Barbara.collier@rogers.com

Cc: Lieut.-Colonel John Murray
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Hon. Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health of Ontario
Email: christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Minister of Seniors and Accessibility of Ontario
Email: raymond.cho@pc.ola.org

Matthew Anderson
President and CEO
Ontario Health
Email: info@ontariohealth.ca