

Granddad slams hospital closure after A&E wait

A GRANDFATHER has hit out at the "wasted resources" in the NHS as the result of the overnight closure of Cheltenham General Hospital.

Bob Wright, 71, had to be looked after for two hours by an ambulance crew because staff at the emergency ward at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital were unable to admit him.

Gloucestershire NHS Foundations Trust has apologised to Mr Wright for the delay, but said it was under extra pressure because of an outbreak of norovirus at Cheltenham General Hospital.

Mr Wright, a quantity surveyor, fell ill on Saturday with dizziness and vomiting and called an ambulance. A paramedic quickly arrived at his home in Tip Hatherley and tried to get him taken to Cheltenham General Hospital.

But because the decision

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was made past the 8pm deadline for ambulance admissions, he was instead taken to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital in Gloucester.

In July, Cheltenham General started to close its doors to all but the "walking wounded" after 8pm, because of a shortage of doctors.

Since November, it has been accepting "stable" emergency patients at an acute admissions unit.

Mr Wright, a father of four, grandfather and great grandfather of one, said: "The paramedic who arrived said we might be able to get into Cheltenham if a certain call handler was on duty. They weren't, unfortunately.

"On arrival at Gloucester I noticed five ambulances out-

side A&E. I was transferred on to a trolley, with up to six other patients all waiting to be assessed by hospital staff.

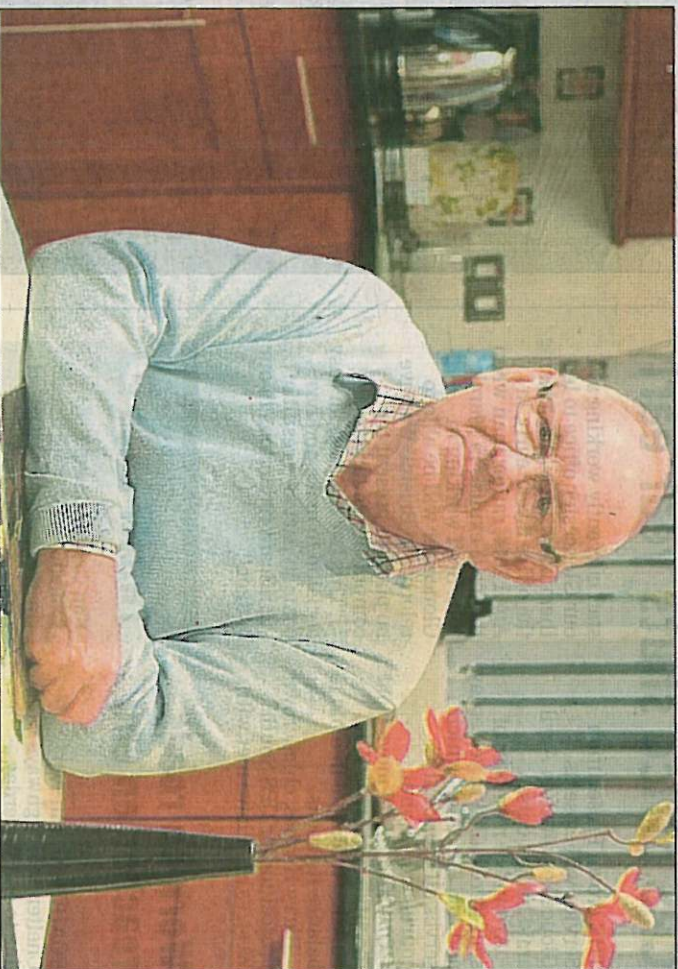
"Some were vomiting or moaning in pain and had a total lack of privacy or dignity. Due to a lack of hospital staff, the ambulance crews had to wait and look after patients while waiting for medical staff."

Mr Wright was told that two of the ambulances waiting had been drafted in from Bristol, and there were no less than 10 ambulance staff waiting to hand over patients.

He was also told there are only seven ambulances available to Gloucestershire on Saturday nights.

He was moved into A&E two hours later, at 10.30pm, and discharged at midnight.

"I experienced firsthand the absolute waste of ambulance



ANGER: Bob Wright at his home in Cheltenham

services," he said. "Cheltenham's A&E department should not be closed at 8pm, especially at weekends, because clearly Gloucester cannot cope with the needs of a growing countywide population.

"The staff were working under extreme conditions without management understanding the problems they have created. They were superb but clearly frustrated.

"Because of my job I can identify many wasted resources. Staff are your most

expensive resource. The only answer is to open Cheltenham A&E at weekends. There are a lot of parties going on at this time of year."

Director of service delivery for Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Eric Galling said: "Our emergency admissions teams work extremely hard to enable ambulance crews to hand over the care of their patients quickly.

"Last Saturday we saw high levels of admissions and pressure due to wards at Chel-

tenham not admitting patients due to a norovirus outbreak.

"Even though we had additional staff on duty that night at Gloucestershire Royal, this meant it took longer than we would like to discharge patients and for beds to become available.

"We are sorry to hear Mr Wright experienced any discomfort while in our care and would like to reassure him that all efforts are made to maintain patient dignity when waiting."