

Our Family's Story

My husband's mother, Gladys Russell McCoy, was 73 and in good health when she contracted COVID-19. When she began having difficulty breathing, she was frightened and went to a hospital in Dade City, Florida. Her elderly husband dropped her off but was not allowed to stay with her.

Because visitors were prohibited, no family member could be with her, advocate for her, or observe her care. During phone calls, Gladys told us she was receiving medication but no food or nourishment. We repeatedly asked to speak with her physician, but two days passed before we spoke with anyone from her medical team. My husband had her medical advocacy rights given by her to the nursing staff per a phone call that was witnessed. Later conversations were primarily to request our consent to place her on a ventilator. When we asked about her likelihood of recovery after ventilation, we were told it was very small. We declined and asked about other treatment options—none were offered.

After the ventilator was refused, we felt our questions and concerns were repeatedly dismissed. We asked that Gladys receive nutrition, be treated with therapies commonly used for bronchitis, and be placed on her stomach to help ease her breathing. We were told only that she was being treated according to protocol.

We later learned that remdesivir had been added to her medications despite her not wanting it. Her organs subsequently began to fail, and she died on August 16, 2021. A few hours before her death, she was moved to hospice so that one family member—her elderly husband—could be with her. Neither of her sons was permitted to see her before she died. Her final text messages to her son said that she was scared.

Our family believes that the administration of remdesivir, together with the COVID-19 treatment protocols and the exclusion of family advocates, contributed to Gladys's decline and death. We continue to grieve not only her loss, but also that she faced her final days frightened and separated from the people who loved her.