

Nurse filmed accidentally switching off Briton's ventilator

October 25 2010

A nurse was secretly filmed accidentally switching off a tetraplegic British man's life-support machine, leaving him with brain damage, the BBC reported Monday as it showed the footage.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council has suspended nurse Violetta Aylward pending an investigation.

Jamie Merrett, left paralysed from the neck down by a 2002 [road accident](#), had a camera installed in his home when he became suspicious about the care he was receiving.

The video, which was passed on to the BBC, shows Aylward mistakenly turning off the ventilator before making a botched attempt to resuscitate Merrett.

A colleague is heard saying "what have you done?" to Aylward, who replied "switched this off," while pointing at the [ventilator](#).

Merrett, from Devizes in southwest England, was apparently aware of the mistake and can be heard clicking his tongue in an attempt to attract the nurse's attention.

Aylward tried to revive Merrett but applied a resuscitation bag in the wrong place.

The machine was turned back on after 21 minutes as [paramedics](#)

correctly revived the 37-year-old but not before he had suffered [brain damage](#).

"He doesn't have a life now," Merrett's sister Karren Reynolds told BBC television.

"He has an existence but it's nowhere near what it was before."

Before the incident, Merrett was able to talk, operate a wheelchair and use a computer through voice-activated technology.

Ambition 24hours, the agency which provided the [nurse](#) for the National Health Service (NHS), said it could not comment as an internal investigation was under way.

A report by the local Wiltshire social services authority, leaked to the BBC, concluded that the agency did not have adequate systems in place to check that staff had received the necessary level of training.

The NHS Wiltshire Primary Care Trust said in a statement: "(We have) put in place a series of actions to ensure that such an event will not occur again either for this patient or others."

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Citation: Nurse filmed accidentally switching off Briton's ventilator (2010, October 25) retrieved 17 April 2024 from

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