

Leckey Mr, The Coroner

From: Leckey Mr, The Coroner
Sent: 17 February 2003 14:26
To: Keatley George
Subject: RE: Media Enquiry

George,

I agree with Jill. The doctor concerned is attached to Belfast City Hospital. I was advised by the hospital that he was on leave at the time of the inquest. However, I am seeking an explanation from him why he did not inform me of this. The failure of a witness to turn up does not always result in a fine - I use my discretion. In this case the doctor's evidence was not crucial to the outcome of the inquest.

John

-----Original Message-----

From: Keatley George
Sent: 17 February 2003 14:14
To: Leckey Mr, The Coroner
Cc: Herron Jill
Subject: FW: Media Enquiry

John

This media query has been referred to me.
Is there anything you wish me to say in relation to this matter?

George

-----Original Message-----

From: Barker Grainne
Sent: 17 February 2003 12:28
To: Keatley George
Subject: FW: Media Enquiry

-----Original Message-----

From: Herron Jill
Sent: 17 February 2003 12:24
To: Barker Grainne
Subject: FW: Media Enquiry

George

I would be grateful for your advice on the attached. My view would be that this is reaching into the boundaries of questioning how the Coroner runs his cases - which I don't think he should have to advise the media

Jill

-----Original Message-----

From: Anderson Donna
Sent: 17 February 2003 10:13
To: Herron Jill
Cc: Quinn Patricia
Subject: Media Enquiry

<< File: Coroner17.dot >> Thanks, Donna

NI COURT SERVICE INFORMATION SERVICE

Media Enquiry Form

From	Trevor Birnie	Date	17.2.3	Time	10am
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Organisation	Utv	Tel. No	[REDACTED]
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Details of enquiry	<p>Earlier in the week I requested an interview with Mr. John Leckey in relation to a programme Ulster Television is making concerning the case of Raychel Ferguson.</p> <p>You replied that Mr. Leckey is unable to facilitate us.</p> <p>Therefore, I want to put a question to you. I may have more later but would prefer an official response to this one.</p> <p>1. Has Mr. Leckey began the process of pursuing the doctor who failed to turn up at the inquest into the death of Raychel Ferguson? Each witness is advised that he or she could be fined for non attendance.</p> <p>Looking forward to hearing from you.</p> <p>Trevor Birney Editor, Current Affairs Ulster Television Tel. [REDACTED]</p>
Context	
What is the article	Current affairs programme
Who else is contributing	N/a

	Deadline	
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Sent to	[REDACTED]	Date	17.2.3	Time	10:10
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NI COURT SERVICE INFORMATION SERVICE

Actioned By		Date		Time	
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Response	
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Closed :	Date		Time	
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Time Taken	
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Prepared By	
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CHILD INQUEST

Duration: 0'59"

A nine-year-old girl who died after surgery at Altnagelvin Hospital could have survived if she'd been given a saline solution by staff. Gerry Bradley reports...

Yesterday, an inquest was told that a Coshquin child Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after her appendix was removed in June 2001. She then suffered a seizure due to brain swelling and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, where she died on June 10. The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St. Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June the 7th. She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed. Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel had suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" immediately after the operation. He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when the little girl had thrown up and said that administering saline solution would have saved the day.

RF - CORONER

O12-074-440

CHILD INQUEST

Duration: 0'28"

An inquest into the death of a nine year old girl who died after surgery at Altnagelvin Hospital is due to resume this morning...Yesterday Belfast Corners court was told that Rachel Ferguson from Coshquin could have survived had she been given a saline soloution by staff. The inquest heard how Rachel continually vomited after her appendix was removed in June 2001. She then suffered a seizure due to brain swelling and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, where she died on June 10.

RF - CORONER

012-074-441

InquestDuration: 0'22"

[Notes;Tel. Keiran McDaid ([REDACTED])

It's been claimed that a nine-year-old child who died in Altnagelvin Hospital could have survived if she'd been given simple medication by medical staff. The claim was made by a consultant paediatrician during an inquest into the death of Coshquin girl Raychel Ferguson at the Royal Victoria Hospital in 2001. For the latest, I'm joined by Keiran McDaid who's a reporter with the Press Association.

<Yesterday, an inquest was told that a Coshquin child Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after her appendix was removed in June 2001. She then suffered a seizure due to brain swelling and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, where she died on June 10. The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St. Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June the 7th. She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed. Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel had suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" immediately after the operation. He pointed to five occasions throughout the day

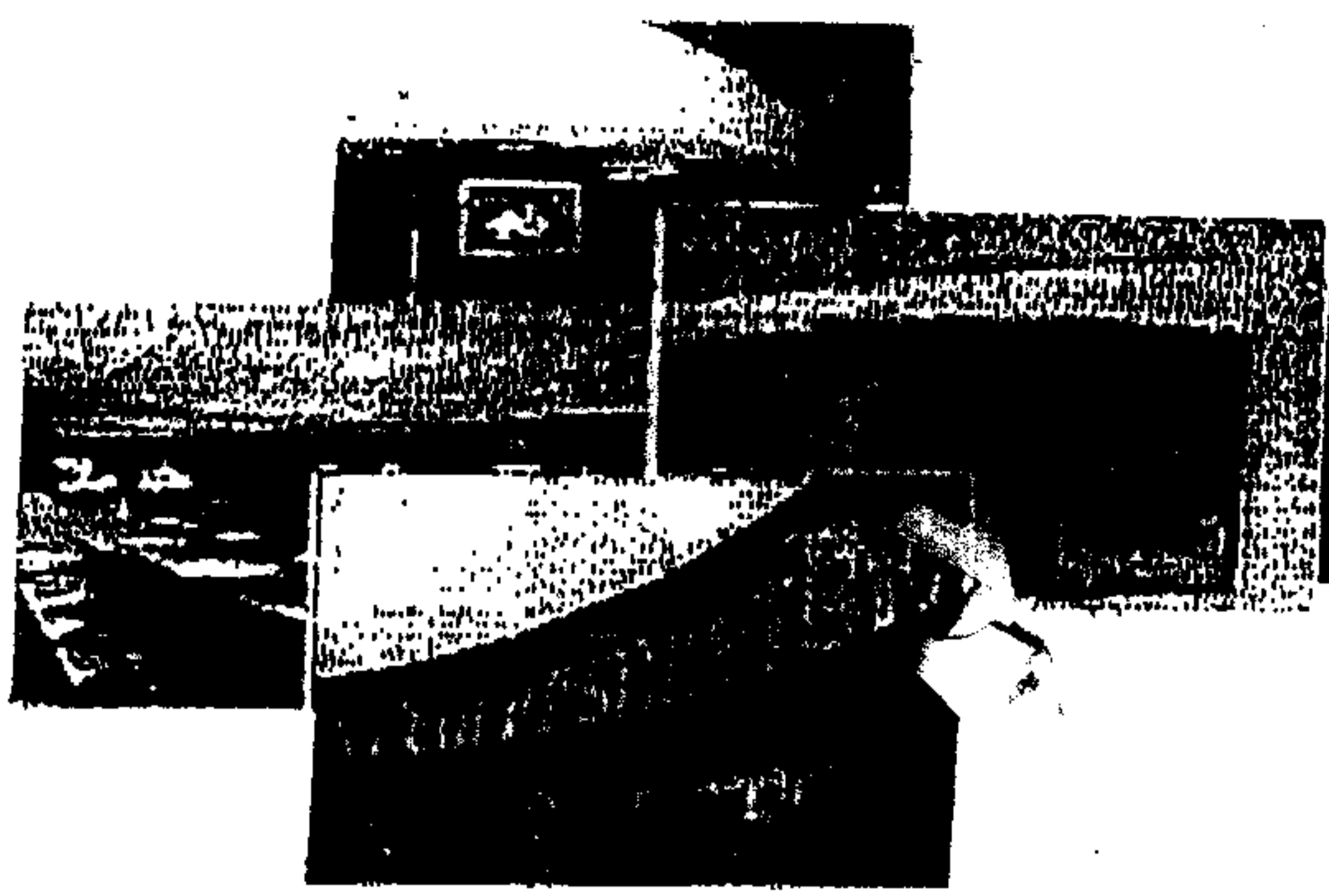
Inquest

Duration: 0'22"

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administering saline solution would have saved the day.

RF - CORONER

012-074-443



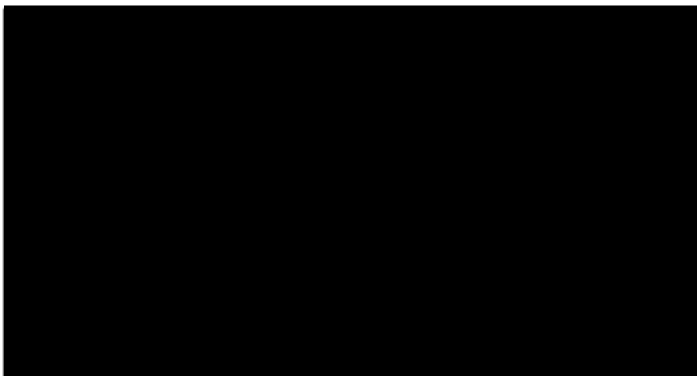
NI COURT SERVICE INFORMATION SERVICE

Fax

Reference: XXX

To (individual): [REDACTED]
To (organisation): Coroners office
Fax Number: [REDACTED]
From (individual): [REDACTED]

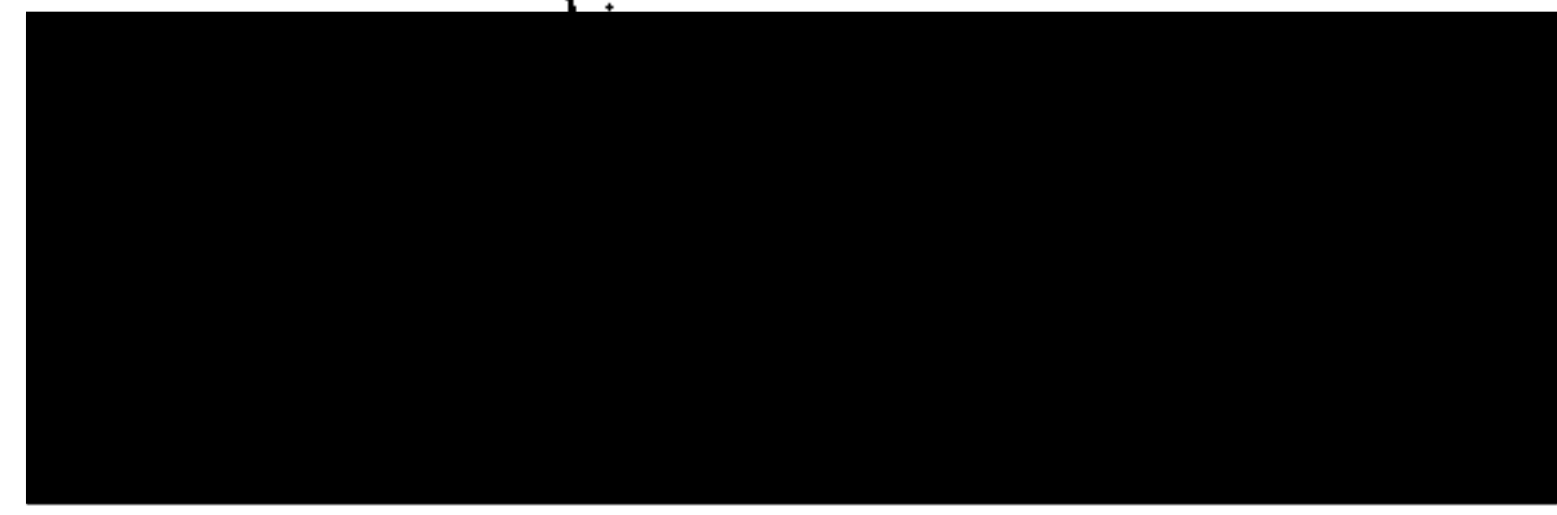
Date: 13/02/03
Time: 9.20am
Total Pages: 5



Probably too late, but here is the transcript of the radio report on the Raychel Ferguson inquest on BBC Radio Foyle.

Sorry for the delay, we had to go to Radio Foyle themselves to obtain this and the tape only arrived in today.

Regards,



RF - CORONER

www.courtsni.gov.uk

012-074-444

*Media Monitoring Unit***JEANNIE JOHNSTON - INQUEST INTO GIRL'S DEATH - UTV LIVE - 5 FEBRUARY 2003**

PAUL CLARKE

An inquest has heard that a 9-year old Londonderry girl died after undergoing a routine operation for mild appendicitis at the Altnagelvin Hospital. Rachel Ferguson's death was caused by a condition called hyponatremia. Since the tragedy guidelines have been issued to all medics here.

JEANNIE JOHNSTON

Rachel Ferguson would have been 11 yesterday. It was in June 2001 that she was admitted to Altnagelvin with mild appendicitis. She had her operation and was up and about early the next morning. But from about 10 am her condition deteriorated. Her mother, Marie, told today's inquest how she vomited constantly over the next 13 hours, and complained of a sore head. She later suffered a fit as her brain swelled due to a condition called hyponatremia, and she died the following morning. Dr Edward Somner, an expert in hyponatremia explained it was an imbalance of fluids in the body. It can be caused by the stress of surgery, particularly in children, and particularly in girls. Rachel had suffered the loss of an excessive amount of sodium due to the constant vomiting, and this was made worse by the normal retention of fluid after an operation. Had Rachel been given a dose of saline, Dr Somner said she would have survived. The doctor, he said, should have picked up on the constant vomiting, and there was a need to keep detailed records of the amount of fluid she had lost from her body. There was no such detailed records. Once she suffered the seizure it was too late. She was then going to die or be brain damaged. However, Dr John Jenkins of the child's Health Department at Queen's University said it was easy to see the danger of the vomiting looking at the total evidence in retrospect, but less apparent to staff at the time. Rachel's mother, Marie, told the inquest that the nurses told her the vomiting was normal, that Rachel had only once seen a doctor that day, and that none of the nurses had asked her for information about Rachel's fluid levels. It emerged today that following Rachel's death, the Chief Medical Officer has now issued guidelines about what Dr Somner calls this Cinderella area of medicine. The inquest continues.

RF - CORONER

012-074-445

NB - This transcript was typed from a transcription unit recording and not copied from an original script. Because of the possibility of mishearing and, in some cases, the problem of identifying individual speakers, the Media Monitoring Unit cannot totally vouch for its accuracy

PM/

*Media Monitoring Unit***INQUEST INTO GIRL'S DEATH - BBC NEWSLINE - 5 FEBRUARY 2003**

A 9-year old girl who died after surgery at Altnagelvin Hospital in Londonderry could have survived if she'd been given a saline solution by staff. An inquest heard Rachel Ferguson continually vomited after her appendix was removed in June 2001. She then suffered a seizure due to brain swelling and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast where she died on the 10th of June.

RF - CORONER

012-074-446

NB - This transcript was typed from a transcription unit recording and not copied from an original script. Because of the possibility of mishearing and, in some cases, the problem of identifying individual speakers, the Media Monitoring Unit cannot totally vouch for its accuracy.

PM/

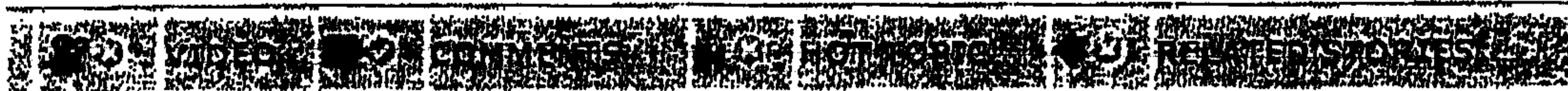
UTV Website

WEDNESDAY 05/02/2003

18:27:00

Child could have survived, inquest told

A nine-year-old girl who died after undergoing surgery could have survived had she been given a saline solution by medical staff at a Londonderry hospital, an inquest heard today.



Belfast Coroner's Court heard Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after having her appendix removed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

Raychel was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure due to brain swelling and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June 7.

She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed.

Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" in the hours after the operation.

He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when the little girl had thrown up and added: "I think that would have saved the day if we had given her saline to cover the vomiting."

Dr Sumner, who carried out a report for Coroner for Greater Belfast John Leckey, said hospital staff should have measured the fluid loss from her stomach and in her urine.

He added: "There should have been fluid supplement administered."

Raychel's mother, Marie, told the court that her little girl complained of hunger pains after arriving home from school on June 7.

However, after she ate her dinner the pains remained and her mother rushed her to the Accident and Emergency Ward of Altnagelvin Hospital after her face turned grey.

On arrival, a doctor told Mrs Ferguson the pains could be due to a problem with her appendix and that it may have to be removed.

The court heard Raychel arrived back in the children's ward following an operation to remove her appendix just after 2am on June 8.

Mrs Ferguson left the hospital at around 6am to get her two sons ready for school. However, she received a phonecall just three hours later informing her that Raychel had been sick.

Raychel's mother told the court that when she arrived at the hospital, her daughter looked ``really well`` and threw her arms around her and said: ``Guess what mummy? I threw up.``

However, after 10.30am that day, Mrs Ferguson said Raychel went very quiet, adding: ``She was just lying on the bed.``

Mrs Ferguson said she told nurses: ``Raychel doesn't look too well.`` However, she said she was given no advice on how to look after her.

She said she carried Raychel to the toilet twice because her little girl ``didn't look too well``.

``She was very weak, she was lying on the bed, I kept talking to her.``

Mrs Ferguson said she left the hospital just before 3pm that day to collect her two boys from school and when she came back at 4pm a woman visiting another child in the ward told her Raychel had not stopped vomiting.

She said that later in the day when she expressed concern that Raychel had vomited a bile-like substance, a nurse told her: ``She won't throw up again now her stomach's clear.``

Mrs Ferguson said she was in the hospital for around 11-12 hours that day and that her little girl had lain in bed for most of that time, vomiting occasionally.

She added: ``I had said to the nurse that Raychel's not well but all the nurse said was that's natural after an operation.``

The court heard there had only been one previous death in Northern Ireland attributed to brain swelling due to hyponatraemia - the medical term for a lack of sodium in the bloodstream.

After Raychel's death the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Dr Henrietta Campbell distributed guidelines to raise awareness of the condition.

These were subsequently circulated throughout the medical community.

They said: ``Any child receiving intravenous fluids or oral rehydration is potentially at risk of hyponatraemia.``

It added: ``The guidance emphasises that every child receiving intravenous fluids requires a thorough baseline assessment, that fluid requirements must be calculated accurately and fluid balance must be rigorously monitored.

``Following this simple advice will prevent children from developing hyponatraemia.

The Newsletter

Thursday 06/02/03

Saline could have saved girl's life, inquest told

A NINE-year-old girl who died after surgery could have survived had she been given a saline solution by medical staff at a Londonderry hospital, an inquest heard yesterday.

Belfast Coroner's Court heard that Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after having her appendix removed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

Raychel was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure due to brain swelling and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June 7.

She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed.

Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" in the hours after the operation.

He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when she had vomited and added: "I think that would have saved the day if we had given her saline to cover the vomiting."

Dr Sumner, who carried out a report for Coroner for Greater Belfast John Leckey, said hospital staff should have measured the fluid loss from her stomach and in her urine.

He said: "There should have been fluid supplement administered."

Raychel's mother, Marie, told the court that her little girl complained of hunger pains after arriving home from school on June 7.

However, after she ate her dinner the pains remained and her mother rushed her to Altnagelvin Hospital after her face turned grey.

On arrival, a doctor told Mrs Ferguson the pains could be due to a problem with her appendix and that it may have to be removed.

The court heard Raychel arrived back in the children's ward following an operation to remove her appendix just after 2am on June 8.

Mrs Ferguson left the hospital at around 6am to get her two sons ready for school. However, she received a phonecall three hours later informing her that Raychel had been sick.

She told the court that, when she arrived at the hospital, her daughter looked "really well".

However, after 10.30am that day, she said Raychel went very quiet.

Mrs Ferguson said she told nurses: "Raychel doesn't look too well." However, she said she was given no advice on how to look after her.

Mrs Ferguson said she was in the hospital for around 11-12 hours that day and that her little girl had lain in bed for most of that time, vomiting occasionally.

The court heard there had only been one previous death in Northern Ireland attributed to brain swelling due to hyponatraemia - the medical term for a lack of sodium in the bloodstream.

After Raychel's death, Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland Dr Henrietta Campbell distributed guidelines on the condition.

They said: "Any child receiving intravenous fluids or oral rehydration is potentially at risk of hyponatraemia."

"The guidance emphasises that every child receiving intravenous fluids requires a thorough baseline assessment, that fluid requirements must be calculated accurately and fluid balance must be rigorously monitored."

"Following this simple advice will prevent children from developing hyponatraemia."

The Belfast Telegraph
Thursday 6th February 2003

Doctor says salt may have saved girl

By Ashleigh Wallace

A SENIOR consultant from Belfast's Royal Hospital for Sick Children told an inquest into the death of a nine-year-old Londonderry girl "something catastrophic" had happened previous to the girl being transferred from Altnagelvin.

Dr Peter Crane, a consultant anaesthetist at the children's hospital, was speaking at the inquest into the death of Raychel Zara Ferguson, from Benview Estate in Coshquin, who died in the Royal on June 10, 2000.

Evidence was also given at the inquest — which opened yesterday — that had Raychel been given saline (salt solution) after a period of severe vomiting, it "may have saved the day".

Raychel was admitted to the A&E department of Altnagelvin Hospital on June 7, 2000 after complaining of

Inquest told how condition deteriorated

stomach pains.

She underwent an operation to remove her appendix on June 8 but during that day she vomited severely over a 12 hour period and went into a seizure which caused her to stop breathing. She also suffered from brain swelling.

Two CT scans were carried out and Raychel was rushed to Belfast's Royal Hospital for Sick Children. However, after tests carried out showed the girl was brain-damaged, her parents made the painstaking decision to turn off her life support machine.

Raychel's mother Marie told the inquest no medical staff had discussed Raychel's condition with her,

adding the only fluids she gave her daughter that day was a "cupful of 7-Up."

The following morning, she took a seizure and was rushed to Belfast, where she later died.

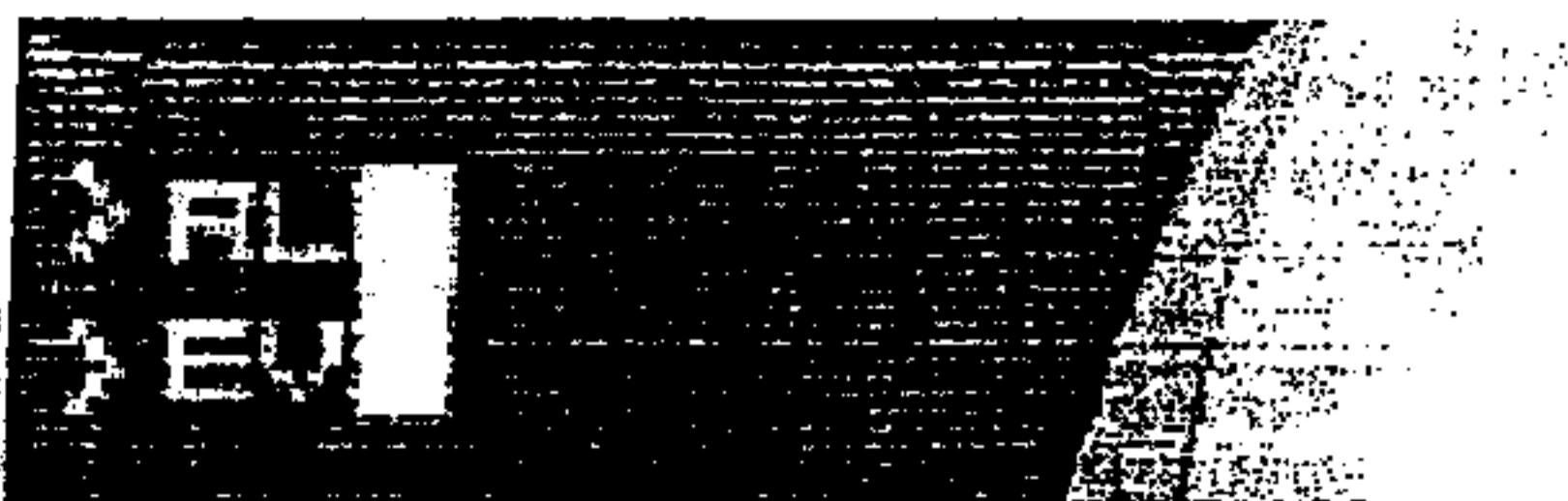
Dr Edward Sumner, a senior consultant paediatric anaesthetist who worked in Great Ormond Street said that after the operation, it was his opinion "there should have been fluid supplement administered" and that fluids which left Raychel when she went to the toilet and vomited should have been monitored.

"I think that what would have saved the day, if we had have given her saline to cover the vomiting," concluded Dr Sumner.

He said death was due to swelling of the brain as the result of hyponatraemia, which is a problem of water balance. The administration of excess or inappropriate fluid to a sick child can result in death.

At hearing.

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WEDNESDAY 05/02/2003 18:27:00

Child could have survived, inquest told

A nine-year-old girl who died after undergoing surgery could have survived had she been given a saline solution by medical staff at a Londonderry hospital, an inquest heard today.

VIDEO COMMENTS HOT TOPIC RELATED STORIES

Belfast Coroner's Court heard Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after having her appendix removed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

Raychel was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure due to brain swelling and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June 7.

She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed.

Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel suffered 'very severe and prolonged vomiting' in the hours after the operation.

He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when the little girl had thrown up and added: 'I think that would have saved the day if we had given her saline to cover the vomiting.'

Dr Sumner, who carried out a report for Coroner for Greater Belfast John Leckey, said hospital staff should have measured the fluid loss from her stomach and in her urine.

He added: 'There should have been fluid supplement administered.'

Raychel's mother, Marie, told the court that her little girl complained of hunger pains after arriving home from school on June 7.

However, after she ate her dinner the pains remained and her mother rushed her to the Accident and Emergency Ward of Altnagelvin Hospital after her face turned grey.

On arrival, a doctor told Mrs Ferguson the pains could be due to a problem with her appendix and that it may have to be removed.

NEWS HEADLI



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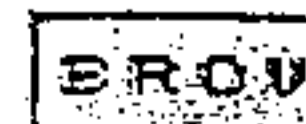
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012-074-451

RF - CORONER

The court heard Raychel arrived back in the children's ward following an operation to remove her appendix just after 2am on June 8.

Mrs Ferguson left the hospital at around 6am to get her two sons ready for school. However, she received a phonecall just three hours later informing her that Raychel had been sick.

Raychel's mother told the court that when she arrived at the hospital, her daughter looked ``really well`` and threw her arms around her and said: ``Guess what mummy? I threw up.``

However, after 10.30am that day, Mrs Ferguson said Raychel went very quiet, adding: ``She was just lying on the bed.``

Mrs Ferguson said she told nurses: ``Raychel doesn't look too well.`` However, she said she was given no advice on how to look after her.

She said she carried Raychel to the toilet twice because her little girl ``didn't look too well``.

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She said that later in the day when she expressed concern that Raychel had vomited a bile-like substance, a nurse told her: ``She won't throw up again now her stomach's clear.``

Mrs Ferguson said she was in the hospital for around 11-12 hours that day and that her little girl had lain in bed for most of that time, vomiting occasionally.

She added: ``I had said to the nurse that Raychel's not well but all the nurse said was `that's natural after an operation`.``

The court heard there had only been one previous death in Northern Ireland attributed to brain swelling due to hyponatraemia - the medical term for a lack of sodium in the bloodstream.

After Raychel's death the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Dr Henrietta Campbell distributed guidelines to raise awareness of the condition.

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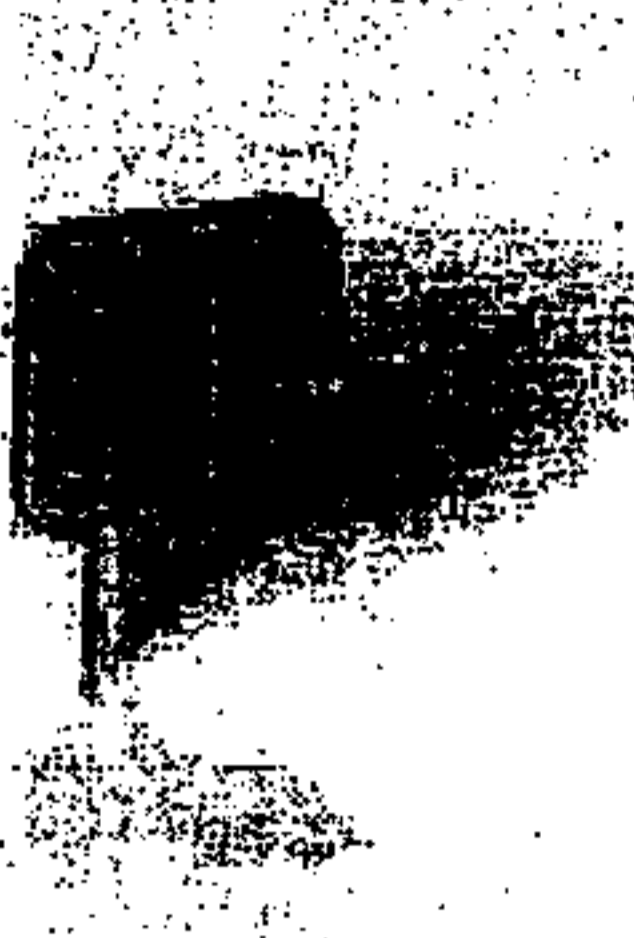
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012-074-452

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012-074-453

NI COURT SERVICE INFORMATION SERVICE

Fax

Reference: XXX

To (individual):	[REDACTED]	Date:	06/02/03
To (organisation):	Coroners office	Time:	1pm
Fax Number:	[REDACTED]	Total Pages:	7
From (individual):	[REDACTED]		

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Here are some press articles covering the Raychel Ferguson inquest that was held yesterday.

Transcripts from UTV and BBC news is also included.

Regards,

RF - CORONER

www.courtsni.gov.uk

012-074-454

The Belfast Telegraph
Friday 7th February 2003

Fluid given to girl (9) 'no longer prescribed'

By Kieran McDaid

A FLUID given to a young girl who died following surgery at a Londonderry hospital is no longer prescribed for children recovering from operations there, an inquest has heard.

A consultant anaesthetist at Altnagelvin Hospital yesterday told an inquiry into the death of Raychel Ferguson that the solution she received was no longer given to post-operative children.

The inquest earlier heard Raychel could have survived if she had been put on a saline drip after undergoing surgery to remove her appendix.

Belfast Coroner's Court heard that Raychel continually vomited after an operation at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

The child was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure and swelling to the brain, and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before com-

Inquest told of change in hospital procedures

plaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn, Londonderry, on June 7.

Her mother then took her to hospital from their Benview Estate home in Coshquin where her appendix was removed that night.

Dr Bernie Trainor, a paediatrician who was called to treat Raychel after she suffered a seizure, told the inquest today that surgeons were responsible for prescribing fluids to children after operations.

She said that when she saw Raychel in the early hours of June 9, she looked "very unwell" and had a rash on her face, neck and upper chest which was consistent with vomiting.

Dr Trainor noted that Raychel had vomited up

seven times following the surgery.

The inquest also heard that the two surgeons who attended Raychel, including Dr Ragai Reda Makar who prescribed the fluids which were administered before and after the operation, would not be appearing.

Coroner for Greater Belfast, John Leckey, said Dr Makar had been written a letter and sent a witness summons to attend the hearing but he had no explanation as to why he had not attended.

The court later heard he was on two weeks leave from another hospital where he now works. The other surgeon, Mr Zafar, was excused by the coroner as he is currently sitting exams.

Paul Foster, a barrister acting on behalf of the Ferguson family, instructed by Kelly and Corr solicitors, expressed concern that this could leave a gap in the evidence of the events which led up to Raychel's death.

The inquest was adjourned until tomorrow.

012-074-455

RF - CORONER

**NI COURT SERVICE INFORMATION SERVICE**

Fax

Reference:

To (individual): [REDACTED]**To (organisation):** Coroners office**Fax Number:** [REDACTED]**From (individual):** [REDACTED]**Date:**

07/02/03

Time:

13.20

Total Pages:2

Another article from today's Belfast Telegraph on the inquest of Raychel Ferguson. If we find anymore in relation to this case we will send them across to you.

Also on the matter of getting a transcript of the report on BBC Radio Foyle yesterday. A tape has been requested from Radio Foyle themselves. Hopefully this should arrive on Monday. The problem was that the people we normally request transcripts from don't cover Radio Foyle. That is why there is a slight delay in getting this to you.

Regards,

