

Hunter Associates

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27 June 2012

My ref: DH/AS/211

FAO John O`Hara QC
The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths
Arthur House,
Arthur Street,
Belfast

Dear Chairman

Re: The evidence of Dr George Murnaghan on Monday 25 June 2012

We have been instructed to raise a particular matter with you in respect of the following extract:

MS ANYADIKE-DANES: Dr Murnaghan, is the upshot of the thing that Adam's family was left with nobody, ostensibly, taking responsibility? No apology, nothing, until the first apology, I think, which may have come in these proceedings?

A. If one differentiates between sympathy, expression of sympathy and apology, I certainly remember that I offered sympathy on behalf of the Trust at the conclusion of the inquest because that was my standard practice.

Q. I understand that, Dr Murnaghan, I'm not suggesting that you wouldn't do that or that any clinician wouldn't do that. That is very different from an acceptance of responsibility for something having happened. I think there's just one --

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, let me reinforce that point. When you have a coroner's verdict, which is to the effect that it was the hospital's fault, do you see how it would aggravate the family that, despite that verdict, the hospital doesn't accept responsibility and the hospital doesn't apologise?

A. I know exactly what you're saying, chairman, but it wasn't within my gift. I was the manager of the process.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

A. And it was known that I had had no clinical input to Adam's care.

Our instructions are to the effect that not only did the family not receive an expression of sympathy from the Trust at the Inquest but that the tone of the Inquest was indelibly engraved upon Debra by the amusement that arose in the courtroom when she misunderstood the reference to sodium.

In view of the confidentiality clause, she has had to contain her memories within her. She has had to reflect, almost alone, upon the events that occurred all those years ago. In the light of those memories, she would wish, to use a legal term, to put Dr George Murnaghan to formal proof of his comments as her own memory does not, repeat not, accord with the evidence presented by him before the Inquiry. If anything, she believes that the correspondence and documentation emanating from the Trust and its representatives tends to support her recollection rather than the evidence of Dr George Murnaghan.

The family accept, however, Sir, that it is entirely a matter for you whether or not you wish to take this particular issue further in any way. Debra simply wished to put her position on the record.

Yours faithfully,

David Hunter

Hunter Associates