

The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths

Chairman: Mr John O'Hara QC

Mr D C Gowdy CB

Permanent Secretary

Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety Our Ref: JOH-37-05

Castle Buildings

Stormont

Date: 27 January 2005

BELFAST

BT4 3SQ

Dear Clive

As you will be aware this Inquiry is focused on the deaths of Adam Strain, Lucy Crawford and Raychel Ferguson. I have been made aware this week of a death in 1996 of another child which may be relevant to my work. Hyponatraemia has not yet been established as the probable cause of death but the Royal has now referred the case to the coroner with an indication that hyponatraemia "may have significantly contributed" to the young girl's deterioration and death. This appears to be a case where hyponatraemia was not identified at the time as causing or contributing to the death and, subject to further investigation, I do not anticipate that it will have been referred to on the death certificate.

I need to know as a matter of urgency whether there have been deaths in Northern Ireland in the last 25 years in which hyponatraemia (however described) **has been** identified as a primary cause of death or even as a secondary or contributory cause. Please provide this information as soon as possible along with the following details in respect of each death:

1. the date of death;
2. the hospital(s) involved;
3. the age of the patient;
4. the cause of death recorded on the death certificate;
5. whether a post mortem was held;
6. whether an inquest was held and, if so, where and when.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John O'Hara

MR JOHN O'HARA QC

Secretary: Ambrose Owens Deputy Secretary: Sharon Lindsay

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