

# The Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths

Chairman: Mr John O'Hara QC

Mr Richard Pengelly  
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Your Ref:

Our Ref: JOH-0469-18

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Dear Richard,

I am pleased to deliver the three volume report of the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-Related Deaths. It will make difficult reading for many people in the same way as the evidence which emerged during the public hearings in Banbridge was often troubling and difficult for those who followed the proceedings. I hope and believe that lessons have already been learned from that evidence. Some issues were so clear cut that progress should have been made even before the publication of the report. In any event there is a series of recommendations which I urge the Department and other public bodies and individuals to accept and implement as soon as possible. It would be informative if an annual update was provided by the Department on the extent to which the recommendations are followed and become part of health service practice.

In the introduction I have acknowledged the contribution made by various people during the life of the Inquiry. It would be remiss of me if I didn't also thank you and your predecessors for your support. In this context I particularly want to mention Dr Andrew Mc Cormick, your predecessor as Permanent Secretary who held that position for a significant period of time as we moved towards and then conducted the public hearings. At no time was there any interference with the independence or work of the Inquiry by you, Dr Mc Cormick or any other Departmental officer. The respect for the integrity of the Inquiry has been much appreciated especially since the Department itself was under scrutiny in a series of important areas.

I also want to acknowledge the support of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Declan Morgan, and my judicial colleagues, past and present. I was appointed as a judge in April 2013, during the public hearings. Sir Declan has always recognised the importance of the Inquiry and has given me as much time out of court as he possibly could to complete the hearings and the report. This has imposed an extra burden on him and other judges. I am grateful to them for carrying that burden.

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I look forward to following the actions which are now taken on foot of the report which I now leave with you.

Yours sincerely,

*John O'Hara*

JOHN O'HARA