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Witness Statement Ref. No. 039/1

NAME OF CHILD: Raychel Ferguson

Name: Donncha Hanrahan

Title: Dr

Present position and institution:

Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Previous position and institution:

[As at the time of the child's death]

As Above

Membership of Advisory Panels and Committees:

[Identify by date and title all of those between January 1995-December 2004]

Training Committee, British Paediatric Neurology Association, 2000 to date

Previous Statements, Depositions and Reports:

[Identify by date and title all those made in relation to the child's death]

None

OFFICIAL USE:

List of previous statement, depositions and reports attached:

Ref:	Date:	

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Particular areas of interest

[Please attach additional sheets if more space is required]

1. Describe in detail your role in the treatment and care of Raychel Ferguson from her arrival at the RBHSC on 9th June 2001 until her death on 10th June 2001 to include:

- (i) the date and time of your first examination of Raychel;
- (ii) your concerns and observations as to her condition at that time;
- (iii) your prognosis for Raychel and possible cause of any deterioration in her condition;
- (iv) details of any tests carried out by you on Raychel together with the reasons for such tests, their outcome; and
- (v) details of any discussions with colleagues in relation to Raychel.

I first encountered Raychel Ferguson on 9 June 2001, between 13.50 and 17.50 (I have not timed my input). I took a history and examined her. She had undergone appendicectomy on 7 June, and started vomiting on 8 June, complaining of headache. At 03.00 on 9 June, she became unresponsive, incontinent and stiffened for 15 minutes. Her pupils were fixed and dilated. She was intubated and transferred to ICU and subsequently to Paediatric Intensive Care in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. CT showed cerebral oedema. Sodium was noted to have dropped to 118 mmol/l from 137 mmol/l (as recorded at 04.30). It remained low at 09.00 (119mmol/l), when her fluids were changed to Normal (0.9%) Saline from 0.18% Saline/4% Dextrose.

When I examined Raychel, I found no evidence of brainstem function and I felt she "seems to have coned with probably irreversible brain stem compromise".

I considered brain stem tests necessary. I carried out two sets of tests, at 17.30 on 9 June and 09.45 on 10 June. On neither occasion was any sign of life elicited. I wrote in her notes at 10.00 on 10 June that she was brain dead.

I carried out the tests in conjunction and in discussion with Dr P Crean, Consultant Paediatric Anaesthetist. I have not commented explicitly on the reason for Raychel's deterioration but did note her hyponatraemia in my clinical entry of 9 June. The Coroner's office was contacted by Dr Dara O'Donoghue. A post mortem was arranged and an inquest subsequently held.

2. Give details of all your communications with the family of Raychel Ferguson both before and after her death to include the dates, times and nature of such communications.

I have not documented my discussions with Raychel's parents. I would have met them on first examining Raychel and I would have undoubtedly expressed to them my concern that she had suffered irreversible brain damage and was likely to succumb. I would have informed them of the necessity to carry out brain stem tests and would have relayed to them the findings of each set of tests on their completion. I would have informed them after the second test on 10 June 2001 that Raychel was brain dead.

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Other points you wish to make including additions to any previous Statements, Depositions and or Reports
[Please attach additional sheets if more space is required]

THIS STATEMENT IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Signed: *Domnick Vannichan*

Dated: *19 July 2005*