

Sperrin

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Doctor back on ward

The doctor at the centre of a controversial death of a child is back on the wards of the Erne Hospital after a lengthy period of sick leave.

The Sperrin Lakeland Trust confirmed this week that Dr. Jariath O'Donohoe (pictured right) has returned to work as a paediatrician at the Erne.

In February this year, Dr. O'Donohoe refused to answer questions at the inquest of Lucy Crawford, the 17-month-old baby from Letterbreen. The inquest found that Lucy had died as a result of blunders at the Erne Hospital in the year 2000.

Poor fluid management resulted in the wrong fluid, too much fluid and the wrong rate of infusion. The Coroner found that this led to the little girl's death.

Dr. O'Donohoe was the consultant paediatrician with direct responsibility for Lucy's care and the management of the fluids she received.

It took almost four years for an inquest to be held on the child, but when it was held, Dr. O'Donohoe refused to take the witness box and answer questions. At the time his legal representative said he had his professional reputation to consider, and after being advised by the Coroner that no witness was obliged to answer questions which appeared to prejudice him, Dr. O'Donohoe declined to answer any questions.

So concerned was the Belfast Coroner, John Leckey, about the case that he instructed that the inquest papers were passed to the General Medical Council (GMC). It has since emerged that the GMC is examining an allegation of serious professional misconduct against Dr. O'Donohoe.

In addition, the Sperrin Lakeland Trust has announced another review of the case.

In spite of these two ongoing investigations, and considerable publicity over Dr. O'Donohoe, he has returned to work.

Of course, the doctor has not been found guilty of any wrongdoing. But in many cases, for example the teaching profession, the central character is told to stay away from work until the case is dealt with.

It is not simply a matter of innocent until proven guilty. It is a matter of the public having confidence in this particular doctor until all relevant investigations are complete.

This week, the Sperrin Lakeland Trust refused on two occasions to answer questions which would have given him their full backing on that score.

The "Impartial Reporter" asked the Trust: "Given the publicity over the Lucy Crawford case, does the Trust support Dr. O'Donohoe's return to work until the hearing is held? Does the Trust

have any concerns about public confidence in Dr. O'Donohoe until the GMC hearing is complete?"

Despite being asked these questions twice, the Trust would only say: "The Trust is co-operating fully with the GMC in respect of their consideration of the Coroner's findings. The Trust have no comment to make until we are further informed by the GMC."

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