

Dr J Nesbitt
Medical Director
Altnagelvin Area Hospital
Glenshane Road
Waterside
Derry
BT47 6SB

19th February 2004

Dear Dr Nesbitt

LUCY CRAWFORD – DECEASED

On 17th February 2004 I commenced the hearing of an Inquest into the death of a seventeen-month-old girl called Lucy Rebecca Crawford who died in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children on 14th April 2000. She had been transferred there from the Erne Hospital, Enniskillen the previous day. The background to her death is set out in the reports of three experts who gave evidence at the Inquest, Dr Edward Sumner, Dr Dewi Evans and Dr John Jenkins and I am enclosing a copy of each. They have agreed the following formulation of the cause of death.

I(a) Cerebral Oedema

due to

I(b) Acute Dilutional Hyponatraemia

due to

I(c) Excess Dilute Fluid

II Gastroenteritis

In the course of the hearing the Counsel appearing on behalf of the family, Mr Brian Fee QC, referred to correspondence that the family had received from Sperrin Lakeland Trust.

I enclose a copy of that correspondence and you will note that I have highlighted a comment made in the covering letter to Mr Neville Crawford which is to the effect that an independent review did not suggest that the care provided to Lucy was inadequate or of poor quality. I understand that the review was carried out by a Consultant Paediatrician at Altnagelvin Hospital, Dr Murray Quinn.

If the statement highlighted accurately reflects the views of Dr Quinn I believe he should reconsider these in the light of the evidence of the three experts and the evidence given at the Inquest into the death of Raychel Zara Ferguson who had been a patient at Altnagelvin Hospital and who died in similar circumstances on 10th June 2001 (Inquest 5th February 2003). In addition, it was conceded by Dr Auterson, Consultant, Anaesthetist, of the Erne Hospital who gave evidence at the Inquest that **“the wrong fluid was given, too much of it was given and the rate of infusion should have been regulated, Lucy’s care was not up to standard.”**

I have not seen the report of Dr Quinn. It was not provided to either the Solicitors acting for the family (Murnaghan & Fee) or to the legal representatives of the Erne Hospital. Possibly, the letter from Mr Mills to Mr Neville Crawford does not summarise adequately the views of Dr Quinn. However, I strongly believe that Dr Quinn and Altnagelvin Hospital (because of the death of Raychel Ferguson) should consider afresh the issues of fluid management of children in the light of the three enclosed reports.

I am sending a copy of this correspondence to Dr Henrietta Campbell, the Chief Medical Officer.

I should be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

J L LECKEY
H M CORONER FOR GREATER BELFAST

Encs

Cc Dr Henrietta Campbell, Chief Medical Officer