

## Young, Christine

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**From:** Moore, Martin  
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Anger as hospital deaths probe is announced  
Raychel's mum hits out at new inquiry

By Ciaran O'Neill

02 November 2004

The mother of a young girl who died after a routine operation at a Londonderry hospital today criticised the make-up of a new inquiry into her daughter's death.

Health Minister Angela Smith yesterday announced that an independent inquiry is to be set up to investigate the deaths of three children in Northern Ireland hospitals in recent years.

It has been claimed that Raychel Ferguson, Lucy Crawford and Adam Strain all allegedly died needlessly from a condition known as hyponatraemia - a shortage of sodium in the body - and that the death of one of the children was covered up.

Mrs Smith said she had established the inquiry, which will be led by QC John O'Hara, to look into issues raised by the recent UTV Insight programme, When Hospital Kills.

"This television programme has raised a number of serious issues and allegations which need to be investigated," said Ms Smith.

"The death of a child is tragic and is something which my Department takes very seriously."

But Raychel Ferguson's mother Maire, from [REDACTED], today said she was disappointed with the Minister's decision.

"I would have preferred a public inquiry headed by someone from outside of Northern Ireland," said Mrs Ferguson.

"I have no trust in the health service and would stress that this inquiry would not have come about had it not been for the investigation carried out by the Insight team."

An inquest into nine-year-old Raychel's death last year heard that she was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from [REDACTED] in June 2001.

Her mother took her to Altnagelvin Hospital where her appendix was removed that night.

Raychel suffered a seizure following the routine operation and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital, where she died a short time later.

The inquest was told that her life could have been saved had she been given a simple saline solution while recovering from her operation.

The two other children whose deaths will be investigated by the new inquiry also died in similar circumstances.

While disappointed with the make-up of the new inquiry, Mrs Ferguson said she hoped it would establish what went wrong.

"I hope that the truth comes out," she said.

"However, I will not give up until someone is held accountable for my daughter's death. If I do not get this outcome from this inquiry, I will continue until I do so."