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Here are some press articles covering the Raychel Ferguson Inquest that was held yesterday.

Transcripts from UTV and BBC news is also included.

Regards,

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RF - PSNI

098-083-248

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Court Service Information Service, Information Centre, Windsor House, Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7LT
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*Media Monitoring Unit***JEANNIE JOHNSTON - INQUEST INTO GIRL'S DEATH - UTV LIVE - 5 FEBRUARY 2003****PAUL CLARKE**

An inquest has heard that a 9-year old Londonderry girl died after undergoing a routine operation for mild appendicitis at the Altnagelvin Hospital. Rachel Ferguson's death was caused by a condition called hyponatremia. Since the tragedy guidelines have been issued to all medics here.

JEANNIE JOHNSTON

Rachel Ferguson would have been 11 yesterday. It was in June 2001 that she was admitted to Altnagelvin with mild appendicitis. She had her operation and was up and about early the next morning. But from about 10 am her condition deteriorated. Her mother, Marie, told today's inquest how she vomited constantly over the next 13 hours, and complained of a sore head. She later suffered a fit as her brain swelled due to a condition called hyponatremia, and she died the following morning. Dr Edward Somner, an expert in hyponatremia explained it was an imbalance of fluids in the body. It can be caused by the stress of surgery, particularly in children, and particularly in girls. Rachel had suffered the loss of an excessive amount of sodium due to the constant vomiting, and this was made worst by the normal retention of fluid after an operation. Had Rachel been given a dose of saline, Dr Somner said she would have survived. The doctor, he said, should have picked up on the constant vomiting, and there was a need to keep detailed records of the amount of fluid she had lost from her body. There was no such detailed records. Once she suffered the seizure it was too late. She was then going to die or be brain damaged. However, Dr John Jenkins of the child's Health Department at Queen's University said it was easy to see the danger of the vomiting looking at the total evidence in retrospect, but less apparent to staff at the time. Rachel's mother, Marie, told the inquest that the nurses told her the vomiting was normal, that Rachel had only once seen a doctor that day, and that none of the nurses had asked her for information about Rachel's fluid levels. It emerged today that following Rachel's death, the Chief Medical Officer has now issued guidelines about what Dr Somner calls this Cinderella area of medicine. The inquest continues.

RF - PSNI**098-083-249****383**

NB - This transcript was typed from a transcription unit recording and not copied from an original script. Because of the possibility of mishearing and, in some cases, the problem of identifying individual speakers, the Media Monitoring Unit cannot totally vouch for its accuracy.

PM/

Media Monitoring Unit**INQUEST INTO GIRL'S DEATH - BBC NEWSLINE - 5 FEBRUARY 2003**

A 9-year old girl who died after surgery at Altnagelvin Hospital in Londonderry could have survived if she'd been given a saline solution by staff. An inquest heard Rachel Ferguson continually vomited after her appendix was removed in June 2001. She then suffered a seizure due to brain swelling and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast where she died on the 10th of June.

098-083-250**RF - PSNI**

NB - This transcript was typed from a transcription unit recording and not copied from an original script. Because of the possibility of mishearing and, in some cases, the problem of identifying individual speakers, the Media Monitoring Unit cannot totally vouch for its accuracy.

PM/

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UTV Website

WEDNESDAY 05/02/2003
18:27:00

Child could have survived, inquest told

A nine-year-old girl who died after undergoing surgery could have survived had she been given a saline solution by medical staff at a Londonderry hospital, an inquest heard today.



Belfast Coroner's Court heard Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after having her appendix removed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

Raychel was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure due to brain swelling and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a normal, healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June 7.

She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed.

Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" in the hours after the operation.

He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when the little girl had thrown up and added: "I think that would have saved the day if we had given her saline to cover the vomiting."

Dr Sumner, who carried out a report for Coroner for Greater Belfast John Leckey, said hospital staff should have measured the fluid loss from her stomach and in her urine.

He added: "There should have been fluid supplement administered."

Raychel's mother, Marie, told the court that her little girl complained of hunger pains after arriving home from school on June 7.

However, after she ate her dinner the pains remained and her mother rushed her to the Accident and Emergency Ward of Altnagelvin Hospital after her face turned grey.

On arrival, a doctor told Mrs Ferguson the pains could be due to a problem with her appendix and that it may have to be removed.

The court heard Raychel arrived back in the children's ward following an operation to remove her appendix just after 2am on June 8.

Mrs Ferguson left the hospital at around 6am to get her two sons ready for school. However, she received a phonecall just three hours later informing her that Raychel had been sick.

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Raychel's mother told the court that when she arrived at the hospital, her daughter looked ``really well`` and threw her arms around her and said: ``Guess what mummy? I threw up.``

However, after 10.30am that day, Mrs Ferguson said Raychel went very quiet, adding: ``She was just lying on the bed.``

Mrs Ferguson said she told nurses: ``Raychel doesn't look too well.`` However, she said she was given no advice on how to look after her.

She said she carried Raychel to the toilet twice because her little girl ``didn't look too well``.

``She was very weak, she was lying on the bed, I kept talking to her.``

Mrs Ferguson said she left the hospital just before 3pm that day to collect her two boys from school and when she came back at 4pm a woman visiting another child in the ward told her Raychel had not stopped vomiting.

She said that later in the day when she expressed concern that Raychel had vomited a bile-like substance, a nurse told her: ``She won't throw up again now her stomach's clear.``

Mrs Ferguson said she was in the hospital for around 11-12 hours that day and that her little girl had lain in bed for most of that time, vomiting occasionally.

She added: ``I had said to the nurse that Raychel's not well but all the nurse said was 'that's natural after an operation'.``

The court heard there had only been one previous death in Northern Ireland attributed to brain swelling due to hyponatraemia - the medical term for a lack of sodium in the bloodstream.

After Raychel's death the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Dr Henrietta Campbell distributed guidelines to raise awareness of the condition.

These were subsequently circulated throughout the medical community.

They said: ``Any child receiving intravenous fluids or oral rehydration is potentially at risk of hyponatraemia.``

It added: ``The guidance emphasises that every child receiving intravenous fluids requires a thorough baseline assessment, that fluid requirements must be calculated accurately and fluid balance must be rigorously monitored.

``Following this simple advice will prevent children from developing hyponatraemia.

The Newsletter

Thursday 06/02/03

Saline could have saved girl's life, inquest told

A NINE-year-old girl who died after surgery could have survived had she been given a saline solution by medical staff at a Londonderry hospital, an inquest heard yesterday.

Belfast Coroner's Court heard that Raychel Ferguson continually vomited after having her appendix removed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in June 2001.

Raychel was then rushed to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital after suffering a seizure due to brain swelling and died on June 10.

The inquest heard that Raychel was a healthy child before complaining of stomach pains on her return home from St Patrick's Primary School in Pennyburn on June 7.

She was admitted to hospital that evening where her appendix was removed.

Dr Edward Sumner, who was a consultant paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London for almost 30 years, said Raychel suffered "very severe and prolonged vomiting" in the hours after the operation.

He pointed to five occasions throughout the day when she had vomited and added: "I think that would have saved the day if we had given her saline to cover the vomiting."

Dr Sumner, who carried out a report for Coroner for Greater Belfast John Leckey, said hospital staff should have measured the fluid loss from her stomach and in her urine.

He said: "There should have been fluid supplement administered."

Raychel's mother, Marie, told the court that her little girl complained of hunger pains after arriving home from school on June 7.

However, after she ate her dinner the pains remained and her mother rushed her to Altnagelvin Hospital after her face turned grey.

On arrival, a doctor told Mrs Ferguson the pains could be due to a problem with her appendix and that it may have to be removed.

The court heard Raychel arrived back in the children's ward following an operation to remove her appendix just after 2am on June 8.

Mrs Ferguson left the hospital at around 6am to get her two sons ready for school. However, she received a phonecall three hours later informing her that Raychel had been sick.

She told the court that, when she arrived at the hospital, her daughter looked "really well".

However, after 10.30am that day, she said Raychel went very quiet.

Mrs Ferguson said she told nurses: "Raychel doesn't look too well." However, she said she was given no advice on how to look after her.

Mrs Ferguson said she was in the hospital for around 11-12 hours that day and that her little girl had lain in bed for most of that time, vomiting occasionally.

The court heard there had only been one previous death in Northern Ireland attributed to brain swelling due to hyponatraemia - the medical term for a lack of sodium in the bloodstream.

After Raychel's death, Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland Dr Henrietta Campbell distributed guidelines on the condition.

They said: "Any child receiving intravenous fluids or oral rehydration is potentially at risk of hyponatraemia."

"The guidance emphasises that every child receiving intravenous fluids requires a thorough baseline assessment, that fluid requirements must be calculated accurately and fluid balance must be rigorously monitored."

"Following this simple advice will prevent children from developing hyponatraemia."

The Belfast Telegraph
Thursday 6th February 2003

Doctor says salt may have saved girl

By Ashleigh Wallace

A SENIOR consultant from Belfast's Royal Hospital for Sick Children told an inquest into the death of a nine-year-old Londonderry girl "something catastrophic" had happened previous to the girl being transferred from Altnagelvin.

Dr Peter Crane, a consultant anaesthetist at the children's hospital, was speaking at the inquest into the death of Raychel Zara Ferguson, from Benview Estate in Coshquin, who died in the Royal on June 10, 2000.

Evidence was also given at the inquest — which opened yesterday — that had Raychel been given saline (salt solution) after a period of severe vomiting, it "may have saved the day."

Raychel was admitted to the A&E department of Altnagelvin Hospital on June 7, 2000 after complaining of

Inquest told how condition deteriorated

stomach pains.

She underwent an operation, to remove her appendix on June 8 but during that day she vomited severely over a 12 hour period and went into a seizure which caused her to stop breathing. She also suffered from brain swelling.

Two CT scans were carried out and Raychel was rushed to Belfast's Royal Hospital for Sick Children. However, after tests carried out showed the girl was brain-damaged, her parents made the painstaking decision to turn off her life support machine.

Raychel's mother Marie told the inquest no medical staff had discussed Raychel's condition with her,

adding the only fluids she gave her daughter that day was a "cupful of 7-Up."

The following morning, she took a seizure and was rushed to Belfast, where she later died.

Dr Edward Sumner, a senior consultant paediatric anaesthetist who worked in Great Ormond Street said that after the operation, it was his opinion "there should have been fluid supplement administered" and that fluids which left Raychel when she went to the toilet and vomited should have been monitored.

"I think that what would have saved the day, if we had have given her saline to cover the vomiting," concluded Dr Sumner.

He said death was due to swelling of the brain as the result of hyponatraemia, which is a problem of water balance. The administration of excess or inappropriate fluid to a sick child can result in death.

At hearing.