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Elaine,

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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*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 worse 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.

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