

Litigation Management Office, 4th Floor, Bostock House, RVH – Tel: [REDACTED]

Our Ref: A.49/04/35/J

16th December 2004

Mr J L Leckey
H M Coroner
Coroner's Office
Courthouse
Old Townhall Building
80 Victoria Street
BELFAST BT1 3GL

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Claire Roberts (deceased), DOB: 10/01/87, [REDACTED]

I wish to report the death of this 9 year old child which occurred on 23rd October 1996 in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit of the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

The circumstances are as follows. Claire had a history of epileptic seizures since age 10 months and had learning disability. She was referred to the A&E Department of the RBHSC by her General Practitioner on 21st October 1996 with a history of vomiting, slurring of speech and lethargy. She was admitted to the paediatric medical Allen Ward under the care of Consultant Paediatrician Dr Heather Steen with a provisional diagnosis of a viral illness.

She was examined by a paediatric neurologist, Dr David Webb and he considered her to have a postictal acute encephalopathy and she was treated as such. She developed hyponatraemia and consideration was given to whether this was from fluid overload with low sodium fluids or a stress induced antidiuretic hormone effect, and her fluid management was altered. At 3.00am on 23rd October 1996 she suffered a respiratory arrest and developed fixed dilated pupils. She was intubated and transferred to PICU where she was ventilated. A CT scan of brain showed severe cerebral oedema and she was declared brain stem dead by Dr Webb and Dr Steen and died at 18.25 on 23rd October 1996. Consent was obtained for a limited hospital brain post mortem and a Death Certificate was issued – Cerebral oedema secondary to status epilepticus. The parents were counselled, and when the Autopsy Report was received on 11th February 1997 Drs Webb and Steen met the parents to discuss the findings. I enclose a copy of the Post Mortem Report.

Following the "Insight" television programme broadcast on 21st October 2004 by UTV, the parents contacted the Royal Group of Hospitals regarding their continuing concerns over Claire's death. The Hospital records were recovered from store and an examination was made of the notes to ascertain whether hyponatraemia had played

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any part in the death. A meeting was held with Mr and Mrs Roberts on 7th December 2004 at which clinicians Dr H Steen and Dr A Sands, involved in Claire's care were present. Professor Ian Young, Professor of Medicine, QUB and Consultant in Clinical Biochemistry has examined the notes and in his opinion there was indication that hyponatraemia had played a part in Claire's death and he reported this to the parents. Mr and Mrs Roberts wished the case to be reported to you for investigation and I am doing so now. The current address for Mr and Mrs Roberts is unchanged from above and their telephone number is [REDACTED]

Mr and Mrs Roberts will be given a copy of your Coroner's Booklet and invited to contact your office in order that they may share their personal concerns with you.

I am holding the clinical notes in my office and await your decision as how to proceed from here.

Yours sincerely



A P Walby FRCS Ed
Associate Medical Director

Enc.