

Witness Statement Reference Number

**WITNESS STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO OUTBREAK OF  
CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE IN THE NORTHERN TRUST HOSPITALS**

WITNESS NAME: MRS ALISON McCLINTOCK

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE**

I, Mrs Alison McClintock, say as follows:

1. My name is Mrs Alison McClintock and I live at an address which is known to the inquiry team.

I am the daughter of Mrs Mary Hill who died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 at Braid Valley Hospital.

I am now the carer for my father.

2. Pre-existing medical history

My mother had osteoporosis and high blood pressure and had been in Antrim Area Hospital on more than one occasion when she had fallen and hurt herself.

She lived with my father in the family home and Social Services came in every day to help her. She was able to walk about the house with the help of a walking aid, but required a wheelchair outside.

My mother was mentally alert, but physically rather frail.

She was 82 years of age when she died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2007.

3. Admission to Antrim Area Hospital

She was admitted to Antrim Area Hospital on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2007. She had fallen and broken her vertebrae. An ambulance was called and they took her to the Accident & Emergency Department. She was then admitted to a 6 bedded room in Ward B. After two or three days she was then moved to a different 6 bedded room on the same ward. It was a mixed ward on this occasion and she was there for approximately one week.

4. She then developed symptoms of diarrhoea and was moved to an isolation room on the same ward where she stayed for approximately two weeks.

5. After that she was moved again to the basement area to a ward which I think was called Fern House. She was there for approximately one week.

6. She was again moved to Braid Valley Hospital where she died five days later. On this occasion she was initially put into a four bedded room and then after one day she was moved to a single isolation room.

7. My mother was informed about the moves and transfers and she kept me informed of where she was being moved to.

8. Wards

In Ward B the toilets were all in the corridor, but when she was in the isolation room she had to use commode because she was so weak. The commode was taken away after use.

9. Visits

I mostly visited in the afternoon with my father. Other members of the family would also have been regular visitors. I did not always visit during regular

visiting hours and I found the hospital to be quite relaxed regarding the visiting times. I could come and go without too much difficulty. It was the same in both hospitals.

10. C Difficile

I had never heard of C difficile before. I knew absolutely nothing about it. There was nothing on the television or in the news at that time.

I did not receive any leaflets or pamphlets from the hospital.

I did however speak to a consultant who told me that my mother had a bowel infection called C difficile and that it was caused by the antibiotics given to her for her chest infection and that they were treating her for it.

11. I was worried about my mother's condition and the fact that she had been transferred to the isolation room in Antrim Area Hospital and so I telephoned the doctor at the hospital to try and find out what was happening. She was not available at the time, but she did phone me back and gave me this information. I phoned because I was having difficulty in getting any information about her condition when I called to visit her.

12. Care

The care was fairly good at Antrim Area Hospital, but it was even better at Braid Valley Hospital. They were able to spend more time with her and she was given more attention at Braid Valley Hospital. They were very caring to her.

13. My mother was quite upset and confused at Antrim Area Hospital. One day she was told that she had taken a stroke and then the next day she was told that she had not had a stroke.

14. She was also upset at having the diarrhoea, but not knowing why she had it.

They told her that she had MRSA but not to worry, but they did not tell her anything about C difficile and only told her that she had a bowel infection. She was told that she had MRSA before she was admitted to the isolation room in Ward B.

15. Although I was told by the doctor during the phone call that she had C difficile, I was not given any advice regarding personal hygiene or what precautions to take.
16. I also spoke to a doctor at Braid Valley Hospital about her condition and symptoms.
17. I would say that the care that she received in Ward B and in Braid Valley Hospital was very good, but that the care in Fern House was not so good. If I spoke to the staff they always said that I would need to speak to the doctor about that. It was difficult to get any information from them.
18. You always had to go looking for information from the doctors and nurses. They did not come to you or volunteer any information.
19. Cleanliness  
  
I never saw any actual cleaning being done, but I did notice a spillage in the Accident & Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital at the time of my mother's admission. There was some blood on the wall and on the floor. I would call it splatters of blood or a few small dots.
20. I was however satisfied with the cleanliness of both Ward B and Fern House, although I think that the toilets on Ward B could have been cleaner. The floor and toilet bowl needed to be cleaned more often.
21. I never noticed any odour or smell about the hospital.

22. Her nighties and other clothing items were left for me in a plastic bag either in the locker or below the bed. It was only after I had been cleaning them for about two weeks that I was given some advice regarding the washing. I was given a piece of paper with some instructions written on it including the fact that her clothes should be washed separately.

I would have liked to have received this information sooner as I had been washing my mother's clothes with the rest of the family wash. I was never given any biodegradable bags.

23. There were gel dispensers and the family used these going into and coming out of the hospital, but we were never given any actual instructions to do so and not advised to wash our hands.

24. The nurses wore uniforms, aprons and gloves. The family did not wear gloves at Antrim Area Hospital, we just used the gel dispensers. However in Braid Valley Hospital we were advised to wear gloves as they told us that my mother had MRSA and they did not want it to be spread around.

25. Communication

We did not receive any notices, leaflets or pamphlets from either hospital about C difficile. The only information we received about C difficile was during a phone call that I had with the doctor, which I have referred to earlier on in my statement.

26. I would describe the information received as minimal. I was just told that it was a bowel infection. I was not told that it was serious. All I knew was that she had very bad diarrhoea and that she was dehydrated.

The family were not even told to wash their hands before and after visits. Antrim Area Hospital did not tell us what precautions we should be taking.

27. There just was not enough information being given out. I would have liked a lot more information and I feel that this should have been given out in an open manner. It should be volunteered automatically by the hospital. I would like to have been told by the hospital at the start what was wrong with my mother.
28. The nurses were very caring and helpful, but there was a complete lack of information being given. We were not told what was happening. I would have liked someone to have spoken to the family on a one to one basis.

There should be better interaction between the staff and the family.

29. Braid Valley Hospital were better at keeping us informed and they also telephoned us at the house.
30. You should not have to chase after the doctors or staff to try and find out what was happening. Information should be given automatically. The doctors and staff should meet with the family on a regular basis and explain the position to them. The family have a right to know what is happening.
31. I would have liked more information about C difficile, what the effects were and the precautions to be taken.

32. Death Certificate

The causes of the death on the death certificate are bronco-pneumonia, myocardial infarction and C difficile diarrhoea. We did not ask for C difficile to be included, it was put on automatically.

33. Food

My mother was not eating much the whole time she was in hospital, but she never complained about the food.

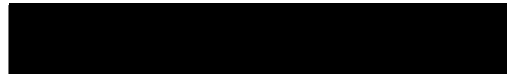
34. Conclusion

I would just have liked the hospital to have given us more information and not to have kept us in the dark.

I declare that this statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated this 9th day of August 2010

Signed

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Mrs. Alison McClintock.

Mrs Alison McClintock