

## Witness Statement Reference Number

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

**WITNESSES NAMES: CATRINA BROWN AND NICOLA  
MCCLLENAGHAN**

1. Our Mum Mrs Gwendoline Kerr was admitted to Ward 2 Mid Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008 with a chest infection. Mum was terminally ill with cancer. She developed significant difficulties with her mobility following her admission to hospital and was subsequently transferred to Ward 6 Mid Ulster Hospital on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 where she remained until she passed away on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2008.
2. Following Mum's transfer to Ward 6 we as family members generally on a daily basis would have taken Mum out of the ward in a wheelchair to either the day room or outside into the hospital grounds which she thoroughly enjoyed welcoming the change of scenery. This was very important to her given she was no longer independently mobile.
3. Mum's grandchildren (aged between 8 and 2 yrs) also visited regularly generally at weekends and spent time with mum in the hospital grounds weather permitting. Her grandchildren were a very important part of Mum's life prior to and during her illness. On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008 Mum's son-in-law and two of her grandchildren went to visit her in the afternoon. On entering the ward her son-in-law was spoken to by a staff nurse who informed him that Mum had contracted Cdiff and was to be moved that afternoon to a side ward. He was advised that the children should not visit. He subsequently left with the children but no further information was provided. We visited later that evening and mum had been transferred to a side room. Nursing staff did not initially approach us regarding the changing circumstances and diagnosis of Cdiff. We had to ask to speak to staff. A staff nurse confirmed the diagnosis, provided some written

information regarding Cdiff and the importance of hand-washing was reinforced.

4. Mum's overall health deteriorated significantly and rapidly over the following seven days. Unfortunately given her isolation she was not able to see her grandchildren again before her death. This caused great upset both to her and ourselves as her children given the substantive role she had played in her grandchildren's lives.
  
5. In addition again as a direct consequence of her isolation she did not have the opportunity to leave her side room. This again was a source of disappointment for both Mum and ourselves given the enjoyment she had previously derived from having the opportunity to spend time outside in the hospital grounds. On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2008 we were contacted by nursing staff to advise of a substantive deterioration in Mum's overall health. Unfortunately Mum was not to recover from this deterioration over the following 48 hour period drifted in and out of consciousness before passing away in the early hours of Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2008.
  
6. Cdiff was recorded on the death certificate as a contributory factor in Mum's death. Medical and nursing staff were very attentive to Mum during the last few weeks of her life. Unfortunately the diagnosis of Cdiff resulted in her being placed in a side ward during the last days of her life whereby she was not permitted to leave her room or permitted any direct contact with her grandchildren. We do as a family have concerns regarding how Mum's diagnosis of Cdiff was relayed to family via her son-in-law and not next of kin. In addition information in relation to Cdiff was not readily forthcoming and had to be requested by ourselves. More detailed information regarding the diagnosis, impact of the infection, prognosis etc. would have been useful.
  
7. In conclusion the issues/concerns pertaining to our family's experiences regarding Mum's diagnosis of Cdiff and subsequent death centre upon:-

- availability and quality of oral and written information
- the substantive impact on Mum and family members of her isolation in the days before her death.

We declare that this statement is true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

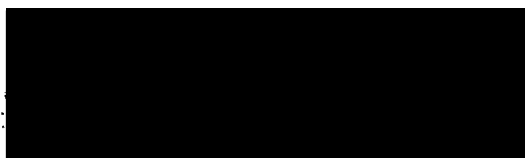
Signed:



Catrina Brown

Date:.....27/8/10

Signed:



Nichola McClenaghan

Date:.....27/8/10