



Witness Statement: *C. difficile* Inquiry, 16/06/07 – 31/08/08

Mr Chris Funston
Microbiology laboratory
Antrim Hospital
Bush Road
Antrim
BT41 2RL

Microbiology Service Manager / Head Biomedical Scientist

Organisation and Management

1. Workload and resources: Laboratory *C difficile* testing before the onset of this outbreak was running at 400 tests per month. During the outbreak this increased to over 1,000 tests per month. No extra staff time or resources were allocated to Microbiology for testing.
2. Systems: No systems in place to facilitate outbreak costing and resourcing.
3. Priorities: Laboratory testing, resourcing and staffing are perceived by laboratory staff to be low in the Trust priorities.
4. Responsibility and accountability: No comment

Communication

5. To staff from management: Communication within laboratory service was good. Communication from Trust senior management was poor in the initial stages but improved in the later stages.
6. To management from staff: Communication was via line management and within the laboratory service this was good.
7. To patients / relatives: Not applicable
8. Guidance / Protocols from Control of Infection team: The control of infection Consultant communicated well with the laboratory.
9. From Microbiology: Microbiology informed Infection Control and requestors immediately by phone once positive results were available.
10. Access to relevant meetings: I was not invited to any *C. difficile* outbreak meetings.
11. Media handling by Trust: No comment.

Support

12. Management (both top and line management): Limited support from top and line management. I was expected to provide all extra Microbiology services without extra resources and within existing process. This led to a heavy reliance on staff good will to meet service needs.
13. Public / Visitors: Not applicable
14. Morale of staff: There was a heavy reliance on staff good will to meet Microbiology service needs, however they felt this was not recognised or appreciated by senior Trust management. In publications of staff news letters the Chief Executive thanked many named groups of staff with the exception of laboratory staff. I complained to my line management about the lack of recognition of the laboratory service, yet further publications continued to omit any recognition. My staff complained to me about the lack of recognition by the Chief Executive and her team and they feel that as a group of staff they are not valued. It is important as a manager that I maintain staff morale which will impact on the quality of the Microbiology Service.
15. Stress: With testing at over 1,000 a month and available 24hs every day there was significant disruption to normal work flow. Staffing levels within the *C. difficile* testing section at times changed from two staff to five staff which impacted on workloads per member of staff in other work sections. This created considerable stress at times as staff struggled to meet all service needs.

Relationship between laboratory and wards

16. Good relations were maintained with wards even during periods of stress and pressure on both sides. We understood the pressures at ward level and always responded as quickly as possible within service limits.

I confirm that this written statement is true.

NAME: 

DATE: 29th April 2010.