



Witness Statement Ref No.

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

WITNESS NAME: DINAH O'DELL

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

I Dinah O'Dell say as follows:

1. I am making this statement at the request of the Clostridium Difficile Public Inquiry. My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am the wife of Peter O'Dell who contracted C Difficile in 2007 and again in 2008. My husband is 86 years of age. He suffers from neuropathy and did so prior to 2007.
3. In September 2007 my husband had been on a course of antibiotics at home for an infection. It may have been a chest infection but I can't really recall. At that stage we did not realise that being on antibiotics can bring on C Diff. Diarrhoea set in and it gradually got worse over four or five days. His temperature also suddenly "spiked", he was unable to do anything and even did not seem to be able to move by himself. The "out of hours" doctor arranged for an ambulance and he was taken to Antrim Hospital.

Admission to Antrim Area Hospital

4. I cannot remember which ward he was admitted to but I do know that he had a single room. In a couple of days or so he was moved to another single room in a different ward - my impression was that they were waiting for a single room on the other ward to become available. I wish to say that I remember the second time he had C Diff and was admitted to Whiteabbey Hospital much better than this first time when he was admitted to Antrim.

Diagnosis and communication at Antrim Hospital

5. Within those couple of days a nurse came in and told us that my husband had C Diff. He was too ill at this stage to take any information in. At that time I did not know what C Diff was. I was aware that it was connected with diarrhoea but did not realise at first how serious it could be. I was not given any more verbal information about C Diff itself at that time. I thought "I've got to try to remember what this name is and look it up myself". I am not sure whether I was given a leaflet about C Diff- it might have been the second occasion that Peter contracted C Diff that I received a leaflet. I am unclear on that point. But at the time I felt content enough with the information I got.
6. I told my brother the diagnosis and he looked up C Diff on the internet for me. He gave me the bare facts but said "I don't want you to look it up yourself, you're as well not to know too much about it". He indicated that he didn't want me to read some of the more horrific details that are on the internet.
7. A doctor in Antrim Hospital who treats my husband for neuropathy had heard that Peter was in the hospital and looked in on him one day. I

said to him "Peter's got C Diff" and I saw the expression on his face change. I followed him out and said "I saw the expression on your face change very quickly - do you think I could lose Peter?" He told me not necessarily but it is a serious thing, so that is when I began to look up more about C Diff myself.

Hygienic precautions at Antrim Hospital

8. When the nurse told me that Peter had C Diff she did encourage me to be very careful with my hygiene and how I touched Peter. I think she also told me it might be as well if I wore an apron. Aprons were available on the wall outside the room and I used them from then on. I also remember I was told to wash my hands but I am unsure whether I was asked to wear gloves - it is possible I may have been told that but I just do not recall.
9. In respect of the cleanliness at Antrim I have no complaints whatsoever. The cleaner came every day and everything that had a surface got cleaned - the window ledge, sills, all of the bed, the trolley for meals, the bedside cabinet and the floor.
10. I think that the nurses always had gloves on but I can't say about the doctors because I was not always there when the doctor came. When my husband was in Antrim Hospital I was very nervous and upset because he was so ill - the second time he got C Diff, which was the next year 2008, I was calmer and so was more aware of what was going on.
11. Peter was in Antrim Hospital for six or seven weeks approximately. The nursing staff were very good and I have no complaints about the care he received. I was there for as long as I could every day and so I saw what was happening. I felt sorry for the nursing staff because

there was so much going on and everybody wanted them two minutes ago. They probably could have done with more staff but that didn't stop them giving quality care.

12. When my husband was discharged home he was very weak because he had not been eating much. It was very difficult for him to walk. There was however a great "care package" put together for him at home.

Re-admission to hospital

13. In August 2008 Peter was taking antibiotics again for a chest infection. His temperature then rose and he wasn't able to communicate with me properly so I called the doctor out. This was over the August Bank Holiday and he was taken to Antrim Accident & Emergency. He did not have any C Diff symptoms at that time. He was initially put in a large room on his own in Accident & Emergency and then transferred to a six bedded room with other patients - this was just a room to wait in while a decision was made as to where a patient would go. At about 10.00 pm they said to us there was no room available at Antrim and would we mind if he went to Whiteabbey.

Transfer to Whiteabbey Hospital

14. He arrived at Whiteabbey Hospital about midnight and was put in a six bedded ward, although I can't recall if that ward was full. When I returned the next day he had been moved to a room on his own. I think diarrhoea must have started during the night and that was why he was moved to a room by himself. Tests were done and I know that I was told within 48 hours that Peter had C Diff again.
15. The care Peter received at Whiteabbey Hospital was very good. They really insisted on me wearing gloves and an apron. If I hadn't them on

a nurse would have said to me. If I had to go out of the room because Peter was being examined I had to take off the apron and gloves and on coming back in I had to wash my hands thoroughly and put fresh gloves and apron on. There was a year between when he first had C Diff and the next bout and I assume regulations were probably tightened in all the hospitals because of the outbreaks. The hygiene was tighter at Whiteabbey than it had been at Antrim. But of course I didn't have anything to compare it with at the time - if somebody had been in Antrim at the same time as Peter was in Whiteabbey they may have got the same kind of instructions.

The care was good in Whiteabbey and the ancillary staff too. They were all very nice, particularly when they realised somebody was on their own. Peter didn't have many visitors as a result of C Diff and it was a lonely time for him. They did not encourage visitors to come, at both Whiteabbey and earlier at Antrim. Our Minister came but we didn't encourage others, particularly anybody who would be in contact with young children. We didn't want any infection to be carried.

Peter's daughter came over from Switzerland and she was permitted to visit because she had travelled but she just stood at the door and did not enter the room. Staff discouraged people from coming into the room.

16. Regarding information about C Diff, Whiteabbey staff knew that Peter had the infection previously and that I knew about it so they just stressed hygiene precautions. I can say that the room was cleaned every day - the locker, bed head and window ledge.

17. My husband was there for about six or seven weeks that time and he had a chest infection and heart problems as well as C Diff symptoms. Thankfully he has not had a recurrence since.

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

Signed:



Dated: *1. OCT. '10*