

Witness Statement Ref No.

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

WITNESS NAME: HAZEL HARTE

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

I Hazel Harte aged 71 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. My state of health is generally good apart from suffering from arthritis.

Admissions to Antrim Area Hospital

3. On 15th June 2007 I was admitted to Antrim Area Hospital as a result of a collapse and being found unconscious. I was diagnosed with "compartment syndrome" that had caused damage to the blood supply to my left leg and my kidneys. I was placed in Accident and Emergency Department to await a bed in another ward and then moved to Intensive Care.
4. I was in Intensive Care for three weeks or so and then transferred to a medical ward. Neither myself nor my family can remember the exact

names of any of the wards I was in during my initial admission or re-admissions. I was not suffering from diarrhoea at that stage.

5. I remained in a main ward overnight in a bay with approximately five other patients. When the nurse in charge in the medical ward became aware of my condition I was placed in a single room within that ward the next day. I had an open wound to my left leg due to an operation and was also receiving dialysis. I had no diarrhoea at that time either.
6. I was there until August and then moved to a surgical ward. I did not want to move because the treatment was so good where I already was and the nurse in charge managed to delay my move on a few occasions. The reason for the move to surgical was I understand because it was an issue for the consultants to come down to the medical ward and also I had been taken to theatre three times during my stay to partially sew up my wound.
7. I remained in the surgical ward for a few days only and was in a general ward that is not a side room.
8. A lady beside me had diarrhoea as did a lady opposite me too – they told me this themselves.
9. On one occasion when I went to the toilet it was obvious that someone had been in there suffering from diarrhoea. It was everywhere. I came directly out and informed a nurse who said she would clean it. On previous occasions the condition of the toilet was fine.
10. After a few days I was discharged. I had been home less than a week when I became very ill suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea.

11. My GP arranged for me to be re-admitted to Antrim Area Hospital. It was a Sunday at the end of August approximately.
12. I was isolated in a side ward in the Accident and Emergency Department until a bed became available and was then admitted to a ward where I had my own room. I do know that there were bays in that ward as well as other side rooms.
13. I am aware that I was tested there for MRSA and a couple of days later I was given a leaflet by a nurse about MRSA. However another nurse came to me approximately one hour later and asked for the leaflet to be returned and informed me that I did not have MRSA.
14. I was in that room for ten days in total and then discharged. Diarrhoea had not ceased when I was discharged.
15. My impression was that someone very ill on the general ward required the room I was in but these are just my own thoughts. This is mainly because I had been speaking to a doctor earlier on the morning of my discharge and he had indicated that he would see me the next day so my discharge was a surprise to me.
16. I had been home for just a week when I had to be re-admitted to Antrim Hospital by my GP as I was still suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting.
17. On arrival I was placed in an isolation room in the Accident and Emergency Department and then admitted to a ward in the new part of the hospital. Again I cannot recall the ward number.
18. I was in a side room with its own bathroom and remained there for ten days.

Quality of care

Intensive Care Unit

19. The attention I received was excellent.

Medical Ward

20. I was looked after very well. The nurse in charge and the other nurses on the ward were fantastic. They took great care to prevent my leg wound from becoming infected.

Surgical Ward

21. The treatment was not so good as in the medical ward. My view is that they did not take as much care when they were dressing the wound to my leg.

22. Patients looked after one another in that ward and the nurses did not interact with patients.

23. My impression was that the nurses tended to be based at the nurses' station as opposed to being visible around the ward.

Accident and Emergency isolation room

24. It was cold but other than that I have no comments on my care whilst in that room.

Side ward (first re-admission)

25. I saw staff when they brought me my medication, food or removed my commode but otherwise did not receive much attention from them. I washed myself in the small sink in the room although I was weak. There were no nurses about to assist.

Side ward (second re-admission)

26. There was no difference between the care given in this ward and the previous one. The medical treatment was fine. I did tell a doctor that I was not going to leave until I was cured because of my experience of being discharged when still suffering from diarrhoea on the previous occasion.

Communication

27. At no stage throughout my various admissions to Antrim Hospital was I or my family informed that I had contracted C diff. No written or verbal information was given to me about C diff at all. I only discovered via my GP in 2009 that I had been diagnosed with C diff by Antrim Hospital in 2007.

28. There was no guidance given to myself nor, to the best of my knowledge, to my family on how to deal with my soiled laundry. My son brought all my laundry home to my daughter in law and so far as I am aware she washed it together with their own.

29. I bagged my laundry for her as I washed and changed myself and would use either plastic bags of my own or ask for a hospital bag. The laundry would have been diarrhoea stained.

30. In respect of hygienic precautions to take in general again neither myself or my family were advised of any.

Cleanliness

Intensive Care Unit, Medical Ward and Surgical Ward

31. The standard of cleanliness was good throughout. In the medical ward and surgical ward cleaners were there every morning. When I was in the surgical ward along with the two ladies who were suffering from diarrhoea there was no evidence of diarrhoea apart from the one occasion I have already referred to when the toilet had not been cleaned after use.

Side ward (first re-admission)

32. I have a specific issue about what occurred in this ward.

33. By the fifth day of my stay there my room had not been cleaned at all. I was of course suffering from diarrhoea at that time and I had to wash myself in that room, eat in it and use the commode there but no cleaning took place for five days in a row. I had been using my own paper "wipes" to clean my tray.

34. I then told a nurse who appeared horrified and a cleaner came the next morning who thoroughly cleaned the room. He was permanent staff and informed me that "They start these students for the summer holidays. The work isn't being done properly." I had myself seen two young boys cleaning the corridor.

35. After this incident the room was always cleaned.

Side ward (second re-admission)

36. The cleaning was very thorough in that side ward.

Precautions

37. There was a notice in all the wards informing visitors to use the dispensers to clean their hands. When I was suffering from diarrhoea I was not aware of any additional precautions to be taken by visitors. But I do know that my son did not encourage visitors to come. I am unaware of whether he was advised of that by hospital staff or whether that was his own decision.

38. In the medical ward nurses wore gloves and aprons when attending to my open wound but I cannot recall whether that was the practice in the surgical ward.

39. I do recall that in the two side wards I was in when suffering from diarrhoea the nurses wore gloves when removing the full commode but I do not remember if aprons were worn.

Experience of C diff symptoms and support given

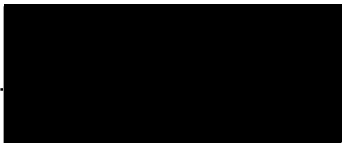
40. The symptoms were horrendous. I had no control over my bowels. C diff destroyed my life for a time because I was afraid to go out anywhere for months in case diarrhoea would recur while I was out. I have never experienced anything like C diff in my life before and I hope I never do so again.

41. Any time I require to return to hospital I must inform them that I had suffered from C diff in the past.

42. I was given no support by the hospital in respect of C diff.

43. My query is why is it happening now that there are these infections in hospitals? I hope this happens to no-one else and that hospitals are kept clean.

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

Signed: ...  ...

Dated: 2.9.2010