

Witness Statement Ref No.

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

WITNESS NAME: JOSEPH BATES

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

I, Joseph Bates, say as follows:

1. My name is Joseph Bates and I live at an address which is known to the Inquiry team.

I am currently unemployed and obtaining incapacity benefit.

I am 38 years of age.

Pre-existing medical history

2. My health was pretty good and I was fine up until my admission to hospital.

Admission to Mid-Ulster Hospital

3. On the 15th of October 2007 I fell and hurt myself. I was in pain and having difficulty breathing that night and so the following morning on the 16th of October my father drove me to the Accident and Emergency department at Mid-Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt.
4. I had been there for a couple of hours when I needed to go to the toilet. While I was at the toilet I lost my strength and collapsed to the floor. I had to pull the emergency cord for assistance. Someone came as I was leaving the toilet and I was then admitted to Ward 1.

5. This was a mixed ward with about a dozen beds in it. The toilet was in the hallway.
6. In any event I started to hallucinate that night and I had no control over my bodily functions. I seemed to be in and out of consciousness. Diarrhoea had actually started that day in the toilet of the Accident and Emergency department and it continued the whole night.
7. They had to change my pyjamas at least twice during the night. I was wearing hospital pyjamas as I had only come to the hospital with the clothes that I was wearing.
8. The other patients on the ward were elderly and as far as I can remember they were all using a bedpan as they seemed to be bed bound and quite ill. There was also a smell in the ward of urine and faeces.
9. I was only in Ward 1 for one day as on the following day I was moved to an isolation room a floor above. I am not sure which ward it was but I was in a room where there was a bed, a sink and one chair.
10. I was in the isolation room for six days and during that time I suffered from diarrhoea and vomiting. I had no appetite, I lacked energy and I felt very weak. I was getting medication and at times I was on a drip.
11. I was using a commode in the room at that stage. When I was finished I would ring the bell and the staff would take away the tray and replace it with a new one.
12. After about two days in isolation they told me that I had C difficile and that they were testing my faeces. They also gave me a little leaflet to read about C difficile. They told me that it was a bug and to make sure that I washed my hands. That was all the information that I was given. I considered this information to be very basic.

13. After six days I was told that I could go home. No other information was given. So I telephoned my brother and he came up and collected me and took me to my mother's house.

Home

14. I stayed at my mother's home for about six to eight months. I still felt very weak and I had lost about one stone in weight. I had no appetite and was constantly going to the toilet.
15. I have been out of work every since this episode and I am now on incapacity benefit.
16. After six months in my mother's home I then felt strong enough to move into my own accommodation. I have been living on my own ever since.

Present condition

17. I have suffered from depression ever since my admission to hospital and I still suffer from it today. I am receiving antidepressants from my general practitioner. I am also attending a consultant in the Mid-Ulster Hospital for dizziness and vertigo. I have been with him on four occasions. The dizziness makes me feel as if I am going to collapse. I feel lethargic and weak.
18. I used to be a drummer in a band but I have not done this since I contracted the C difficile infection. I had been a drummer in a band since I was sixteen years of age but I have no interest in it now. I have not lifted the sticks for over two years. I now have a very poor social life.

Wards

19. I was initially in the Accident and Emergency department which I would describe as quite hectic. There were lots of people and everyone was coming

and going. I was initially on a chair in the waiting room but then given a bed to lie on with the curtains pulled around me.

20. It was while I was in the Accident and Emergency Department that I got a feeling of dizziness and weakness and a need to go to the toilet. This was the first occasion on which I had the diarrhoea.

Broken ribs

21. After a couple of days in the isolation room and because I was in so much pain with my ribs, I was taken to the operating ward where they drained 2.75 litres of blood which had apparently collected in my chest. They also told me that I had two broken ribs. I was in the operating room for about an hour and then brought back to the isolation room.
22. I felt very weak, drowsy and nauseous. The fact that the blood had been drained gave me some relief from the pain.

Isolation

23. I think that there were a few isolation rooms together along a corridor. The staff came in to give me my medication and food but I did feel quite isolated and alone.

Visits

24. Some of the family came every day at regular visiting hours (either my mother, father, brothers or sisters). As there was only one chair in the isolation room they sometimes had to sit on the bed. No one ever told them not to do so. They did however wash their hands and use the gel dispenser when they came in and left.

C difficile

25. I was not aware of C difficile and knew absolutely nothing about it. The only information I received from the hospital was contained in the leaflet which they gave me. However a couple of months after I left the hospital I heard about C difficile on the television and in the newspapers.
26. It made me feel frightened as I had not realised the full consequences and effects of the infection. It was then that I heard about people dying from it. My opinion is that the depression I now suffer has a lot to do with this.
27. Even after my discharge from hospital I still had symptoms of diarrhoea which made me feel pretty sick. It took a week after my discharge until the symptoms of diarrhoea had finally stopped.

Care

28. I feel that the care I received was quite poor. I was kept in the isolation room and not told anything.
29. The nurses came in twice a day, once in the morning and once at night to dispense medicine, but that was about it. They were only with me for a minute or two.
30. I never saw a doctor except when I was having the blood drained from my chest. No one ever spoke to me about C difficile.
31. The staff were friendly but I feel that they kind of avoided coming into my room. They did not bother with me and it was as if I was "out of sight and out of mind". I got the feeling that they were trying to hide something from me.
32. I think that I saw the tea lady more often than the nurses. She was in three or four times a day.

33. I was never given any prognosis or diagnosis. I was not even given the results of the tests. They just told me that I was being discharged and nothing else was said or done.
34. I was not given any further information or told what precautions I should take.
35. They even gave me a bag containing my dirty clothes which I had been wearing at the time of my admission and which I had soiled when I went to the toilet in Accident and Emergency. They were put into a plastic bag which was tied at the top. I just took them home and threw them in the bin.
36. I just felt that the care was substandard . I think that the staff were frightened of the C difficile infection.

Cleanliness

37. I never saw any actual cleaning being done in any of the wards or rooms that I was in.
38. I was in the isolation room for six days and no one every came to clean it while I was there.
39. I would describe the cleanliness of the isolation room as pretty poor. There was dust on the wheels of the bed and on the windowsill. The floor was also tacky.
40. I used to wash in the wash hand basin and clean myself but I was never given a bedbath or shower while in the hospital. I asked for a shower but was told I could not take one because of my illness. I was not even able to wash my hair.
41. My mother also commented on the uncleanliness of the isolation ward.

42. The nurses wore uniforms but I did not notice them wearing gloves or aprons.
43. Gel dispensers were available but I did not see the staff using them in my room.
44. I thought that the cleanliness was below par and not as clean as I would have expected a hospital to have been.
45. I am only commenting on the isolation room that I was in and I have no comment to make regarding Ward 1 or any other area of the hospital.

Communication

46. As I have already said, I did receive a leaflet about C difficile and I was also told by the staff to make sure that I washed my hands. I passed this information on to the other members of the family.
47. However I did not receive any other advice or information from the hospital whether written or verbal and the effects of the C difficile were never discussed with me.
48. No advice was ever given regarding the laundry or anything else.
49. I was not given any information regarding the results of the tests but just told after six days that I was being discharged and that I could go home.
50. There has been no further contact from the hospital and no further advice or information regarding the infection. No further checks, enquiries or examinations have been carried out by them.
51. I would describe the information and communication I received as basic. I got more information from the newspapers and television two months later.

52. I would have liked more information and I feel that the patients should be given a regular update in respect of their condition and given information about after-care.
53. Even when I asked my general practitioner about the situation he knew very little about it either.
54. I feel that I received very little advice and I was extremely scared about passing the infection on to someone else.
55. The hospital should be more pro-active. They should be more forthcoming and not have to be prompted. Any questions I did have they did not have answers to.
56. I felt that they were not very helpful in respect of their information.

Food

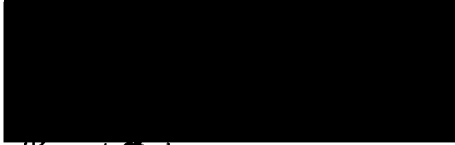
57. The food was standard and adequate.

Generally

58. My experience in hospital was quite appalling, devastating and frightening. There was a lack of communication and information was like an unknown quantity. They seemed to know nothing about it.
59. I do not know what the long term effects of this are or whether it could arise again in the future. I thought that the care was substandard and not what you would have expected by today's standards.
60. I certify that this statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated 2/9/10

Signed



Joseph Bates