

Witness Statement Reference No.

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

WITNESS NAME: KATHLEEN KILLOUGH

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

I, Mrs Kathleen Killough, say as follows:

1. My name is Mrs Kathleen Killough and I live at an address which is known to the Inquiry Team. I am a retired Office Manageress.

I am 77 years of age.

I was a patient at Antrim Area Hospital at the time of the C difficile outbreak and I believe that I was admitted on 31st December 2007.

2. Pre-existing medical history

Up until my admission to Antrim Area Hospital I would have said that I was a healthy person and I did not spend a lot of time with doctors.

However about 10 years ago I had an abscess on my back which burst and so I was admitted to Antrim Area Hospital to have it removed. This was a one day procedure. I would have to say that I found the hospital very dirty at that time and I was put into a room which looked more like a store room as it was cluttered with utensils and trolleys. There was no bed and I was left sitting on a chair.

I was very unimpressed by Antrim Area Hospital at that time and I was told afterwards by one of the doctors that I had contracted MRSA.

Then about eight years ago I had a problem with my heart and was sent to Dublin for surgery. As I had previously had MRSA they had to carry out tests before they accepted me for surgery.

I have also been attending my GP with colitis which eventually was diagnosed as bowel cancer.

3. Admission to Antrim Area Hospital

Then on 31st December 2007 I was admitted to Antrim Area Hospital for bowel surgery. I was in for about three weeks and was then sent home but I had to be readmitted for further surgery to the bowel in or about May 2008. I was in hospital for a further two or three weeks at that time.

4. Wards

I was admitted to Ward C5 on the first occasion and to Ward C6 on the second occasion. However shortly after my admission on both occasions I was transferred to a single room. No explanation was given but I assume that I must have contracted C difficile.

The side wards would have been six bedded with three beds down each side. They were mixed wards with both men and women. They had a gents and ladies toilet which you shared. There were also lockers, side tables, chairs and wash hand basins in the ward. There were probably not enough chairs as I sometimes noticed visitors sitting on beds. The single rooms had their own toilet facilities.

5. Visits

My daughter visited me every day and other members of the family, relatives and friends were also regular visitors. They only visited during the regular visiting hours and for the rest of the day I was on my own.

6. Single rooms

I felt slightly isolated in the single room and sometimes you felt as if the staff had forgotten about you. There was more activity in the ward and I feel that you get more attention in the ward than in the single room.

7. Care

I felt that the care was good enough and would not complain about it.

I do not know when my symptoms started and was not told why I was suddenly being moved to a single room. They just came in one day and transferred me.

I am a very contented sort of person who does not complain but I did feel isolated in the single room and I felt that the staff did not want to come in too often as they knew that I was contaminated. Nor do I remember getting any special treatment for my condition.

I would not complain about anything but I thought that the attitude of staff and the care and attention that I received was not too bad.

8. Cleanliness

I saw the cleaners cleaning the wards nearly every day. Sometimes the ward was very clean but on other occasions, especially when I was in the single room, it was forgotten about. Sometimes things were left lying on the floor and not cleaned properly.

They were slow to change the beds and sheets. The beds were not changed all the time.

I never saw the curtains being changed or the walls being washed.

Overall the toilets were not too bad.

I was able to wash and clean myself and my daughter took my nighties home.

There were plenty of gel dispensers and most people used them.

The doctors wore white coats and the nurses wore uniforms. The nurses would also put on gloves and aprons when they were dealing with me.

I did not see any signs on the wall regarding hygiene or cleanliness.

No-one ever spoke to me or gave me any advice regarding my own personal hygiene or what safety precautions I should take.

9. Communication

Neither I nor any member of my family ever received any notice, leaflet or other written communication from the hospital. Nor did I see any notices or other information on the notice board, entrance door or anywhere else.

I was never told directly that I had C difficile or that there was an infection in the hospital. I actually found out about it from the television when I was in hospital.

A lot of patients were being moved about from ward to ward when I was there.

None of the doctors or nurses ever took me aside or spoke to me about the C difficile outbreak. I was not even aware if they were taking samples to have them tested.

I would have seen a doctor whenever he was doing his rounds. This would not have been every day. When they came to your bed they spoke to each other about me but did not speak to me.

The nurses spoke to me but they never discussed the infection.

10. C difficile

I do not know when I contracted C difficile. No-one actually told me that I had it.

Some of the staff were open and straightforward but others were not so approachable.

I think that I should have been told that I had C difficile and that the matter should have been fully discussed and explained to me.

I should have been told the seriousness of the infection and also the consequences. I would also like to have been told how long the symptoms would have lasted.

11. Experience of Antrim Area Hospital

A lot more could have been done by Antrim Area Hospital to make it more approachable for patients. There needs to be more communication.

The staff are very professional and they do care for you but there was never enough of them and I felt that the hospital was understaffed. Sometimes when I rang the bell for assistance I had to wait quite a long time before someone came to assist me.

My main complaint was however the lack of information and communication that I received. Nothing was ever discussed with me. They talked to each other but not to me. I would like to have had a consultation on a one to one basis.

I should have been given advice on what it was and how to deal with it.

The nurses should be given more time to interact, communicate and deal with their patients on an individual basis. They should be allowed time to talk to the patients and provide reassurance, rather than just giving out the medicine and doing their routine nursing work.

12. C difficile

I had never heard of C difficile before I contracted it.

I did not get any oral or written information from the hospital or their staff. It was never discussed with me.

I was not even advised that I had the symptoms.

I was not told why I was being transferred to an isolation room and was not given any information about hygiene, washing of hands or what precautions to take.

I feel quite disillusioned and disheartened to think that I contracted C difficile in hospital and yet no-one in the hospital told me that I had contracted it or how to get rid of it.

I had difficulty eating in hospital, felt weak and lost a lot of weight.

Psychologically I was very low.

There has been no further contact from Antrim Area Hospital even after I was discharged and I would not be happy if I had to go back there.

13. Food

I have no comment to make regarding the food as I was not eating very much. Food was not a big issue for me.

14. Conclusion

I felt isolated when I was in the single room. I felt that everyone was trying to avoid me as if I had the plague. I also felt that I did not get the same attention as I would have got in the ward situation.

The quality of the information about C difficile was non-existent. I did not get any.

Regarding the standard of cleanliness I would say that at times it was good and at times it was careless.

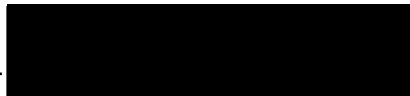
My overall experience of C difficile is that I went into hospital to get better and ended up getting this horrible infection. It will take me a long time to get over the experience.

15. Hearing

I would prefer not to be asked to give evidence at the oral hearing.

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

Signed .



Date 6-8-2010

Mrs Kathleen Killough