



Witness Statement Reference No. \_\_\_\_\_

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

**WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL OGILVIE**

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE**

I, Michael Ogilvie, say as follows:

1. My name is Michael Ogilvie and I live at an address which is known to the inquiry team.

I am the son of Mrs Margaret Noelle Ogilvie who died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2009 at Mater Hospital, Belfast. I am now retired.

Pre-existing Medical History

2. Prior to my mother going into hospital I regularly took her shopping. She lived with my father in a house in Carrickfergus. She was quite fit and well up until about five years before she died. She had fallen on that occasion and had to be admitted to Whiteabbey Hospital. We found out later that she had suffered a number of minor strokes. Over the years she had a number of falls. She also suffered from osteoporosis and a little dementia. She was 86 years of age when she died.

Admission to hospital

3. About two years before she died she fell at home and broke her hip. An ambulance was called and they took her to the Royal Victoria Hospital where she stayed for about two weeks.

4. She was then transferred to Ward 9 at Whiteabbey Hospital for rehabilitation where she stayed for about two months. After about two or three days there the doctor told us that she had C difficile.  
  
It was very serious as the doctor told us that she only had between 12 to 48 hours to live. I phoned my sister and she flew over from England to be with her. My mother had very bad diarrhoea and was extremely ill for about one month.
5. My mother then improved and in or about April 2008 she was transferred to Ward A1 at Antrim Area Hospital. We were told that she was being transferred there because she had C difficile. She was in Antrim Area Hospital for approximately two weeks when she fell out of bed and broke her other hip.
6. She was then transferred to Ward C at Royal Victoria Hospital for another two weeks for treatment for the broken hip.
7. After this she was transferred back to Whiteabbey Hospital, Ward 9, which is the rehabilitation ward where she stayed for about two months.
8. She was then transferred to Tamlaght Nursing Home in Carrickfergus where she was put into a single room. She was there for about two months while the family organised a care package so that she could be brought home. With the package two carers came in four times a day to look after her toileting, cleaning and bathing.
9. However even when she was at home she took ill on several further occasions and had to be admitted to the Antrim Area Hospital about four or five times and to the Mater Hospital at least twice. She was admitted to the Mater Hospital for the last time about one month before she died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2009.
10. My father died shortly afterwards on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2010.

### Wards

11. C Ward in the Royal Victoria Hospital was a six bedded ward and the toilet was in the corridor. I remember it as being very cramped and with little space for visitors.
12. Wards 9 and 10 in Whiteabbey Hospital were both six bedded. One had an en-suite toilet and with the other the toilet was in the corridor.
13. In Ward A1 of Antrim Area Hospital she was in a six bedded bay and I think that the toilet was in the corridor.

### C difficile

14. I had never heard of C difficile before and knew nothing about the infection. The first I knew about it was when the doctor asked to see me in her office in Ward 9 at Whiteabbey Hospital and she then told me that my mother had C difficile. This would have been in or about March 2008. The lady doctor seemed to be suggesting that she must have caught C difficile at Royal Victoria Hospital as she had only been in Whiteabbey Hospital for some two or three days. She was put on antibiotics as the doctor said that she only had between 12 and 48 hours to live. I think they tried two different antibiotics.
15. She was then transferred to Antrim Area Hospital because she had C difficile where she was put into a sterile ward. She had diarrhoea, had difficulty eating, was losing weight and deteriorating badly. She was dehydrated and needed fluids. She was also immobile and had to use a bedpan and pads.
16. I noticed a very bad smell and my wife also noticed that the clothes were soiled. She had diarrhoea in both Whiteabbey Hospital and Antrim Area Hospital. She also had symptoms in the house as the carers had to deal with it and they were the ones who called the ambulance to take her back to Antrim Area Hospital and Mater Hospital for further treatment.

17. Sometimes she was put into an open ward and sometimes she was in an isolation room. The transfers were not discussed with the family. I believe that the only time that she was in a single isolation room was in Whiteabbey Hospital.

#### Visits

18. I visited twice a day, in the afternoon and again in the evening. My father also came with me on occasions when I put him in a wheelchair and pushed him around to see my mother. Other members of the family were also regular visitors. We would normally visit at regular visiting hours although when she was seriously ill the visiting was more relaxed and they let us stay as long as we wanted to.

#### Care

19. Generally speaking I am reporting from my own experience rather than from what my mother told me. In relation to the Royal Victoria Hospital I noticed that they were short staffed. They were very busy, but the care provided was alright.

#### Whiteabbey Hospital

20. In relation to Whiteabbey Hospital there was one occasion when my mother wanted to go to the toilet. She pressed the buzzer but no one came for 20 minutes so I went down to the reception area where there were four or five nurses all talking and laughing together. I said that my mother had pressed the buzzer some 20 minutes ago as she needed the toilet, but it took another 10 or 15 minutes before someone eventually arrived.
21. Then there was another occasion when I was giving my mother a tissue and noticed 6 tablets in the box. So I picked out the tablets and took them to the nurse at the reception who laughed and said that she must be hiding them in

the tissue box. I was quite annoyed as if she needed the tablets then the staff should make sure that she was taking them. I did not think that this was a laughing matter.

22. Overall however I would have said that the care was very good, but I would have liked them to have been a little more attentive. I thought that there was understaffing and that this might be the cause of the problem. When they dealt with my mother they did so in a satisfactory way.

#### Antrim Area Hospital

23. I was unhappy with the care or lack of care that she received at Antrim Area Hospital. I remember on one occasion I found her slumped over the bed and I could not straighten her up. So I went to find a nurse as I was annoyed about the state she was in. While the nurse did prop her up on the pillows again I did however think that she should have checked the patients from time to time to make sure that they were comfortable. After all my mother was prone to falling out of bed and I thought that she should have been given extra care and attention because of her condition.
24. I was so worried about her in Antrim Area Hospital that I booked an appointment with the doctor. We had a meeting in his room at the back of the reception area. He said that he did not know what was wrong with my mother, but that it was probably due to a number of small strokes that she had had. In any event the doctor became agitated by the questions being asked by my father and myself and as I thought that he was being rude to my father I told him that there was no need to be so abusive. With that he said that he was terminating the meeting and he left the room. He did not even hold the door for me so that I could get through it with the wheelchair. He then came back and tried to speak to me as I was pushing the wheelchair down the corridor, but I told him that I did not want to speak to him any further and that he was a disgrace to his profession.

25. I told him that I would be writing a letter, which I did but unfortunately I have not retained a copy. I delivered the letter to the sister in the ward who said that she would give it to him. I was told that he would meet me at 16h00 but he did not turn up for this appointment.
26. I think that the nurses at Antrim Area Hospital were understaffed. They seemed very busy and were always rushing around. They had no time to speak to me.
27. I would not say that my mother was upset in Antrim Area Hospital but she did want to go home. A lot more could have been done for her there and I feel that the staff do not care properly for the elderly patients.

#### Mater Hospital

28. The care in the Mater Hospital was probably the best. That is up until she fell out of bed again.

#### Transfers

29. When she was being transferred she was taken on her own by ambulance. We were told if they were taking her to another hospital but not if she was being moved to a different ward.

#### Cleanliness

30. I saw cleaning being done in all three hospitals and so I am speaking from my own personal knowledge of the situation.
31. In relation to the Royal Victoria Hospital I remember seeing insulin caps and paper lying on the floor which should not have been there. I also noticed a spillage on the floor, but was told by the staff that they had no mops with which to wipe it up. I mentioned this to the staff and noticed the next day that there were mops outside every ward.

32. Although I noticed the cleaners wiping the beds I did not see them washing their hands or changing their water or cloths before they moved to the next bed. I thought that this was wrong as there could be cross-contamination.
33. I also noticed a spillage of blood on my mother's sheets which was about six inches in diameter.
34. There was also a smell of urine about the place.
35. I also felt that she was not being properly washed especially in her private areas. She was not being given any bed baths nor was her hair being washed or combed. I was not happy with her personal hygiene.
36. I would not say that everyone was washing their hands or using the gel dispenser. Some visitors were not complying with the precautions.
37. The nurses wore gloves and aprons but the visitors did not wear any protective clothing.
38. There were not enough chairs and I saw some visitors sitting on beds. Sometimes there were half a dozen people around each patient's bed.
39. The walls, floors, beds and lockers could have been kept cleaner. I did not feel that the cleanliness was up to scratch. I never saw any beds being moved so that they could clean underneath.

Whiteabbey Hospital

40. Once again I noticed syringe caps and paper lying on the floor.

The cleaners were washing the beds but using the same water and cloths rather than getting a new bucket and cloth to wipe each bed.

There was also a strong smell of urine in the ward.

I only saw the cleaners with brushes rather than using the old buffers that they used to use in the hospitals.

My father said that the cleaners only gave the ward a lick and a promise.

There appeared to be more gel dispensers than in the Royal Victoria Hospital.

The nurses wore aprons and gloves but the visitors did not wear any protective clothing.

There were more chairs, but I noticed that the visitors were still sitting on the beds.

Overall I would say that Whiteabbey Hospital could have been tidier and cleaner.

#### Antrim Area Hospital

41. There was really no difference in any of the three hospitals. Once again the cleaners would have been using the same water and cloths for different beds.

The only exception would have been A1 as it was spotless. There was much more rigorous cleaning in A1 than anywhere else. They even made me wash my hands, and put an apron and gloves before I visited my mother. They were very good at giving out advice and the whole place was spotless. You could notice the difference as soon as you walked in to the ward. I was very happy with the cleanliness of Ward A1.

#### Mater Hospital

42. I have nothing specific I want to say about the cleanliness of Mater Hospital as it was alright there.

### Communication

43. I never received any written notices, pamphlets or leaflets from any of the hospitals. Nor did I see any notices or other information on the notice boards.
44. The only verbal communication I got was from the doctor in Whiteabbey Hospital and also from a doctor in Ward A1 at Antrim Area Hospital. They told me that my mother had C difficile and that it was an infection in the bowel.
45. I would however have liked more detailed information about C difficile. I would have liked the doctors and staff to have been more open with me about my mother's condition. I would also have liked more information about the laundry. We were only told to wash it in hot water. We took it home for months before we were given any information about how to wash it.
46. We were not given any information about washing our hands or using the gels. We just knew that we should do so. There were however occasions when there was no gel in the dispenser.
47. I would have liked to have been given more detailed information from the doctors about her condition. I would have liked the hospital to have been more proactive about the information and more interactive with the family.
48. We probably learnt more from the television about C difficile than from the hospital.

### Food

49. My mother was not eating very much but I do think that there should be more variety and choice with the menu. She needed more help with her eating. She needed assistance and encouragement to eat her food. It might have helped for the food to have been processed as she was sometimes choking on her food/ water. She had difficulty eating and drinking.

Summary

50. On one occasion at Whiteabbey Hospital the staff brought her out of the ward and made her sit at the reception so that they could keep an eye on her, but she found this very degrading.
51. My mother also fell out of bed at Antrim Area Hospital, Whiteabbey Hospital and Mater Hospital.
52. I certify that the statement that I have given is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Signed

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Michael Ogilvie.

Michael Ogilvie