

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

THE ORAL HEARINGS FOR THE VALE OF LEVEN HOSPITAL INQUIRY TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK

The first phase of the Inquiry into the outbreak of the *Clostridium difficile* (*C diff*) infection at the Vale of Leven Hospital during 2007/8 will get underway on Monday, June 7, 2010.

Lord MacLean will chair the oral hearings, which will start at the Community Central Halls in Maryhill at 10am. The first set of these hearings is expected to last up to two weeks.

The Inquiry will investigate the circumstances contributing to the occurrence and rates of *C diff* at the Vale of Leven Hospital, in particular, between December 1, 2007 and June 1, 2008. Lord MacLean will also be able to refer to other experience of *C diff* infection within and beyond Scotland to help inform recommendations.

On the first day, Lord MacLean will briefly address the hearing to outline the timescale, which will be followed by a minute's silence to remember those patients who died. Senior Counsel to the Inquiry, Colin MacAulay QC, will then explain the format of the hearings, what will happen and who will be taking part.

Patients, relatives of those who died and key hospital staff will be among the witnesses to give evidence throughout the Inquiry. Patients and families are being represented by Thompsons Solicitors.

Julie-Anne Jamieson, secretary to the Inquiry, said: "The first phase of the Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry hearings will establish the factual history, including the experiences of patients and their relatives affected by *C diff* at the hospital.

"The next stage of the hearings will begin in the autumn and will focus on evidence from hospital staff, health board managers and experts in infection control."

The Inquiry is about finding out what happened, why it happened and, importantly, how to make a difference for the future.

The Inquiry website will be updated every day with a transcript of the day's hearing. It will also detail who is giving evidence and when.

During the hearings, a separate room will be provided for those patients and families who were affected to enable them to follow the Inquiry in private. It has plasma screens which will relay the proceedings in the main hearing room.

Lord MacLean and other members of the Inquiry team will be based in the Community Central Halls throughout the duration of the Inquiry's hearings.

The Inquiry will sit between 10am and 4pm every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. For further information about the Inquiry or to follow its developments, please visit www.valeoflevenhospitalinquiry.org.

Ends

Issued on behalf of the Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry by The BIG Partnership. For more information, contact:

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Notes to the editor:

The Inquiry will be conducted in two broad phases. The first phase, which started in October 2009, involves gathering and assessing the available evidence by written statement and at hearings. This phase aims to establish the factual history, including the experiences of patients and their relatives.

The second phase is likely to involve holding further hearings into specific issues identified as requiring further investigation and with expert contribution. The procedures to be used by the Inquiry are described in the guidance on the Inquiry website.

The secretary to the Inquiry is Julie-Anne Jamieson and the deputy secretary is Mark Dorrian. They are primarily responsible for all of the organisation and administration of the Inquiry, managing staff and responding to queries from those with an interest.

The solicitor to the Inquiry is Nigel Orr and the deputy solicitor is Felicity Cullen. They are primarily responsible for controlling investigations, gathering evidence, taking statements and arranging the programme of hearings.

The Inquiry chairman, Lord MacLean, has appointed two specialist assessors to provide him and Counsel with medical and nursing advice. They are Dr Geoff Ridgway OBE and Mary Waddell OBE.

Dr Ridgway has recently retired as consultant clinical microbiologist at University College London Hospitals. Mrs Waddell has recently retired as Director of Nursing for the Eastern Board in Northern Ireland.