

**Inquiry Witness Statement of
John Gourlay BURGESS**

1. My full name is John Gourlay Burgess. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

BACKGROUND

2. I am the surviving son of Agnes Douglas Gilroy Burgess, born 11th April 1921. My mother passed away in the Vale of Leven Hospital ("VOLH") on 31st December 2007.
3. The cause of death on my mother's death certificate is listed as 1a: Acute Renal Failure, 1b: Respiratory Infection, 1c: Dementia and 2: Ischaemic Heart Disease. The death was certified by Ruth McCrystal.
4. On 18th January 2007 my mother was taken into the Fruin Ward of the VOLH as she was suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease. She was there until mid-August 2007 when she was moved to Castleview Nursing Home in Dumbarton. She was taken into the VOLH on a number of occasions whilst she was in Castleview because of her heart condition.
5. At some time in November 2007 and again on 4th December 2007, my mother was taken into Ward 6 of the VOLH because of her heart condition, but on both occasions she was transferred back to Castleview after a couple of days.
6. On 20th December 2007 my mother was again admitted to the VOLH because of her heart condition. My father, James Burgess, born 25th June 1921, was also a patient in the VOLH at the time.

7. My mother was initially admitted to Ward 3. I have been shown a plan of Ward 3, **Ward 3 Original (Production No 5)**. I have identified from this plan as Room 12 being where my mother was. This was a four bedded room and my mother was situated in the bed against the far wall on the left as you enter the room.
8. My mother only spent one night in Ward 3 before being moved to Ward 6 the following day (21st December 1007). I have been shown a plan of Ward 6, **Ward 6 Original (Production No 10)**. I have identified from this plan Room 13 as being where my mother was. This was a two bedded room and my mother was in the bed parallel to the far wall as you enter the room. I did not ask why my mother had been moved from Ward 3 to Ward 6.
9. After a couple of days my mother was moved to a single room within Ward 6. I have again been shown a plan of Ward 6, **Ward 6 Original (Production No 10)**. I have identified from this plan Room 19 as being the room that my mother was moved to. My mother remained in Room until her death on 31st December 2007.
10. I can recall visiting my mother when she was in Room 19 and being told by a nurse, whose name I do not know, that my mother had an infection. I was never given any details as to what the infection was. I thought that my mother had been moved to a single room because of her Alzheimer's and to prevent her annoying the other patients. I did not think she had been moved because of any infection.
11. At this time my mother was on a drip because she was not eating or drinking. I assumed that any other medication she was on would be for her heart condition and possibly something to treat whatever infection she had.
12. On 30th December 2007 I went to visit my mother in the afternoon and saw that she had an oxygen mask on. A senior staff nurse, whose

name I do not know, took me aside and told me that she did not think that my mother was going to make it. I could see that my mother's condition was deteriorating rapidly.

13. I went back to visit my mother that same evening and took my father from where he was in the hospital in Ward 15 to see my mother. I left the hospital at about 2000hrs when the visiting ended.

14. At 2350hrs on 30th December 2007 I received a telephone call from the VOLH asking me to come in as soon as possible as my mother had deteriorated further. I got to the VOLH at about 0010hrs on 31st January 2007 but my mother had passed away only a few minutes before I arrived.

C DIFFICILE

15. I was never told at any time that my mother had contracted *Clostridium difficile* ("C.diff"). When I had been told that my mother had an infection C.diff was never mentioned to me.

16. At no time when visiting my mother in Ward 6 did I see any sign that she had diarrhoea or any symptoms other than those that I believed she was being treated for.

17. I have been asked if any of the nursing or medical staff ever discussed a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation ("DNAR") order with me. At no time was this ever mentioned to me. Had it ever been mentioned to me I would not have agreed to it as I am pro-life.

VALE OF LEVEN HOSPITAL**Hand Washing Facilities**

18. I have been asked about hand washing on the wards. I was never given any instructions regarding washing my hands when visiting my mother at the VOLH. I knew to wash my hands with the alcohol gel simply because of the number of times that I had visited my parents in hospital. I believe that I had been advised to clean my hands by a member of staff previously, and had always continued to do so.
19. I cannot recall there being any signs instructing visitors to wash their hands when entering the wards at the VOLH. If anything, hand washing appeared to be optional. I was never at Ward 6 at the start of the visiting hours so I am unable to comment on whether or not other visitors washed their hands. I am certain that all of the wards did have green hand gel dispensers in the corridor leading to the wards.

Cleanliness

20. I have been asked about the general cleanliness of the VOLH. I can recall that back in the 70's the VOLH was absolutely filthy. At the time of my mother's death I would say that the VOLH appeared to be reasonably clean.
21. Whilst my mother was in Room 19 of Ward 6 I was present when staff came into the room. Sometimes they would be wearing gloves and aprons and sometimes not. I would say that it would be a mix of gloves and aprons, gloves or aprons or neither.
22. I have been asked to give my general opinion of the VOLH. I cannot say that I have a particular opinion, save to say that if I required hospital treatment, I would have no concerns about going into the VOLH.

23. I cannot offer any criticism of any of the staff at the VOLH. I would say, however, that if anything morale is extremely low in all of the wards at the VOLH as I believe that staff have been living under the threat of closure for some time.

24. I would say that Ward 3 was run considerably better than Ward 6 at the VOLH. Staff were never available during the evening visiting hours. If anything I would say that Ward 6 was undermanned and the staff lackadaisical.

Laundry

25. I have been asked about the laundry facilities in Ward 6 of the VOLH. I never took any of my mother's laundry home to clean. Most of her clothes were at Castleview which has its own laundry facilities.

Death Certificate

26. I have been asked if I have any concerns over the cause of death listed on my mother's death certificate. I am content that the causes listed on my mother's certificate are consistent with her condition as I knew it.

27. I am not involved with the *C.diff* Justice Group and have no desire to involve myself with this group.

28. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.

Dated...*17/3/10*.....