

Inquiry Witness Statement of

Patricia BYNON

1. I am Patricia Bynon. I am the fourth daughter of the late Coleman Conroy who died at the Vale of Leven Hospital ("VOLH") on 30th March 2008. I live in Australia but returned to Scotland on 18th January 2008 after a phone conversation with Mr Porteous of the Royal Alexandra Hospital ("RAH") a few days earlier. I stayed with my sister, Anne Chisholm.

Admission to VOLH

2. My Dad had had an operation at the RAH and was very ill. Dad was in the High Dependency Unit. Dad contracted *Clostridium difficile* ("C. diff") whilst there. This was around the 28th January 2008. Dad recovered and was moved to a shared ward. Dad deteriorated as he was unable to feed properly. I'm not sure what medication dad was taking. He was moved back to intensive care for a few days, then into a single room around the 6th February 2008. When dad was in the single room we were told that dad had pneumonia. Somewhere in between my sister told me that Dad had contracted MRSA.
3. My two sisters and I took upon ourselves to come in to the RAH every day and feed Dad lunch and dinner as Dad was not really able to do this. Dad had gone through so much with pneumonia, renal failure, the operation, blood transfusions, *C. diff* and MRSA that he was quite exhausted.

4. Dad made slight improvement and a few of the doctors at the RAH said he was a fighter and they were amazed. Around 1st March we were told that Dad would be moving back to the VOLH for aggressive rehabilitation. He was due to be moved on 3rd March but was not moved until 5th March.

5. At the time of Dad's transfer he had been vomited for several days. On 5th March, after visiting time, my sister Bernadette and I spoke to Dr McDonald at the RAH. Dr McDonald was unaware that Dad was vomiting. My Dad was transferred to the VOLH at 5pm the same day by ambulance with another patient.

Treatment at the VOLH

6. When I visited the VOLH that night (5th March 2008) Dad was agitated and quite flushed. Dad's robe was down, exposing Dad's chest. Dad kept saying that they had left a camera on his leg. We patted down his bed and said "There, it's okay now", thinking he was a bit delirious. Dad kept insisting that it was there, so we lifted up the covers. We saw that Dad's catheter bag was lying against his leg which was making him uncomfortable. We went to speak to one of the nurses and asked if she could make Dad more comfortable.

7. After a few minutes, or maybe five, the nurse came. The nurse said that the staff did not have time to settle Dad in yet. This was after 7pm and Dad had been transferred at 5pm from the RAH. We left. When we came back later Dad's bed was made, the catheter bag was hanging beside the bed and Dad's robe was put on properly.

8. Over the next few days Dad was still vomiting and not eating well. Quite a few times I saw Dad with his robe hanging down. It was quite embarrassing as Dad's bed could be seen as I entered the ward. I remember one of the nurses saying they could not move Dad from the holding room until his test came through. When the test did come through and was clear, the nurses were just waiting for a bed in the rehabilitation ward.

9. By about the 7th or 8th March Dad had deteriorated. My sister Anne and I received a phone call from the hospital about this and we went straight to the hospital. We made an appointment with the rest of the family to see the doctor treating Dad. The doctor told us that Dad had pneumonia in both lungs and Dad's kidneys were failing. The doctor said they would not resuscitate Dad if anything should happen as there were too many other complications. I asked if they would still treat him and the answer was yes.

Rehabilitation ward

10. Dad was moved to the rehab ward downstairs on the night of 12th March, just before visiting time. We were not told about Dad being moved until we went to the ward that he had been in.

11. In the rehab ward Dad was sitting in a chair. He was very uncomfortable and was asking to be put into bed. He was in a shared room with three other men. I remember the nurse coming into the room and saying that my Dad had *C. diff*. The nurse handed us some gel and said "you should use this".

12. The nurse settled Dad into his bed. I noticed that all Dad's cards and little prayer were not with his belongings. I asked the nurse, and the nurse said they would be upstairs in ward Dad had come from. So I went to the ward where Dad had been. A nurse or cleaner was wiping down with a cloth the mattress of the bed Dad had used. I asked about the cards. She said they had put them in the bin. She had a look in a black bag that was beside the bed, but the cards were not there. I returned to Dad on the rehab ward.

13. Dad was moved to a single room the next day. We enquired about coming in to feed him as we had done at the RAH, but we were told no – this was part of his rehabilitation that he should learn to feed himself again. We had no idea what he ate, if he ate, or what medication he was on. We were asked to bring in his clothes so he could be up and dressed every day. We were given his clothes home to wash every day.

14. Dad became very tired even though he seemed to be eating. A few times, at visiting times, I saw spills of yoghurt or something else he had had on the floor. I remember one visiting time when a cleaner came in and started cleaning the wash hand basin and mirror and cleaned round about us. I thought it was a strange time to start cleaning. The cleaner then went into the toilet and cleaned that, even though my Dad could not have used the toilet as he had had a catheter in for three months.

15. The tea lady would bring Dad his tea of a night on her rounds. Two rooms down there was a lady called Irene who would wander around. The lady in the next room – who I think was called Angela – would burst out screaming and the smell that came out of her room was just awful. I wondered if Dad ever got any peace.

That same lady, one afternoon visiting time, was being escorted down the corridor. She urinated and her slippers squelched, leaving marks all down the corridor. Those marks were still there at the night visiting time.

16. Whilst Dad was in the VOLH, I did some of Dad's laundry. At the time he was diagnosed with *C. diff* there was soiled laundry. I remember once putting his pyjamas in the bath to scrub the stool off. His slippers also had stool on them. I ended up throwing out the slippers and buying him a new pair.

17. The day before Dad's death (29th March 2008), he was showered in the morning. I think this was his first shower. When I came to visit the nurse said "Party time. I'll put him in a wheelchair and you can all go down to the dining room", which we did. Dad seemed very bright and talkative. My sister Anne cut Dad's hair. We had a good time together.

18. Dad had recovered from *C. diff* because I remember a brief discussion with a nurse in the corridor around 25th March. She told us that Dad had *C. diff* again. She said she had not told Dad as he had enough to deal with. We also had a discussion with a nurse as to what we were going to do with Dad. (a quick conversation in the corridor) Were we going to find him a nursing home? This was only a few days before Dad's death.

19. That night (29th March 2008) Dad slept all through the visiting time and he was very pale. The next morning (30th March 2008) my sister Anne phoned the hospital later than usual, as it was a Sunday. She phoned at about 10am and

was told "He's fine, up eating breakfast". At 12.15pm I received a phone call from the hospital telling me that Dad had just passed away. Dad was dead.

20. We arrived at the hospital a short time after as we lived about five minutes away. Dad was will warm and lying fully clothed on the bed. Why were we not called sooner? After three months of being there, how is it possible that no one knew Dad did not have long that day? Dad's room was right outside the nurses' station: why? If we had been told, we would have stayed the night with him. How could they not know?

21. 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.

Patricia Bynon

15th June 2008