

Scottish Hospitals Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Derek Horne

WITNESS DETAILS

1. My name is Derek Horne. I was born on [REDACTED]. I am [REDACTED] years old. I am a [REDACTED].
2. I am the father of Kimberly Darroch and grandfather of [REDACTED].
3. I live with my wife, Christine Horne in [REDACTED].

OVERVIEW

4. My Grand-daughter is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in 2012 (ALL) when she was 5 years old. After two and a half years of treatment, [REDACTED] went into remission. [REDACTED] then relapsed in January 2017 when she was 9 years old. [REDACTED] was treated at the Royal Hospital for Children (RHC). She attended the hospital as an in-patient and as an out-patient although it was mostly as an in-patient.
5. [REDACTED] spent time in ward 2A, which was known as the Schiehallion unit, of the RHC. She received treatment from January 2017 and had a successful bone marrow transplant in June 2017. [REDACTED] was then admitted to PICU in the RHC for six weeks, due to an infection and septic shower, which we now know was connected to the water supply at the hospital. [REDACTED] passed away at 3am on [REDACTED], aged 10 years old.

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DEREK HORNE

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FAMILY BACKGROUND

6. [REDACTED] even the name says it all, a fun-loving girl, beautiful and wild and loved mixing with other kids. She was intelligent and sharp and was clever at school. Everybody seemed to enjoy [REDACTED]'s company and liked her. She was never away from our door and we had holidays in the caravan on a regular basis. She was just a normal, fun-loving girl. She seemed to love nature and was never out of the garden.
7. She loved animals and loved the zoo. We've got a plaque up in the zoo at the Five Sisters in Livingston now with her name on it in the wolves' enclosure. She loved the wolves.
8. She wasn't a girly girl. She played in the garden with all sorts of insects and loved doing that, to be honest. It's horrible but snails, believe or not, she loved the snails in the shells, not slugs, snails. She'd collect them and feed them and things. She had a wee bit in the garden, [REDACTED]'s garden and her wee brother, [REDACTED] is now looking after that. [REDACTED] tells me "Papa, look at this, look at the wee stones with [REDACTED]'s name on it and my name on it". [REDACTED] would have loved that, to be honest.
9. She had a great relationship with her other papa, I can say that much. They were always out walking the dog on a regular basis.
10. She just loved her wee brother too, [REDACTED], when he came along, they just hit it off. They loved each other and well they still do and she had a great relationship with her dad, they were so alike.

11. ██████'s always in our thoughts every day. She never goes away, I am always thinking about her and missing her. We couldn't have asked for a better granddaughter, to be honest; just perfect. I miss her so much.

EXPERIENCE IN THE RHC

12. I didn't spend a lot of time in the hospital whilst ██████ was getting her treatment as I was helping to look after ██████'s brother most of the time. I did spend a bit more time at the hospital once ██████ was transferred to the PICU and we knew she was very sick.

13. We knew ██████ had a line infection and her line had to be taken out and she had had a septic shower. Even once she was there we thought she was going to be okay. She was put on all these machines and the nurses were telling us that they were wonderful machines and that ██████ would be fine. We put our trust in them, the hospital, what else could we do.

14. Late on in August, when ██████ was in the PICU, Kimberly and I got called into a side room, the times and dates escape me. Professor Gibson and another consultant took us into a room and basically told us that ██████ was a very sick girl. They didn't go into great detail of the outcome but that was their comment. We were shell-shocked at the news and I can't remember exactly what was discussed. At that time we knew that ██████ had an infection, but we weren't told what the infection was and there was never any mention that it was a water borne infection.

15. After that, things seemed to deteriorate quickly and every part of ██████'s body was failing. The consultant had come through and spoken to us and said they had done everything they could. It was a female doctor during the night, at three o'clock in the morning, who switched ██████'s machine off and she passed away.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE HOSPITAL BUILDING

16. At the time, there was nothing obviously wrong with the hospital building. It was a brand-new building, the ward looked immaculate, the room looked immaculate, and the facilities looked immaculate. It looked the part.
17. I think the infection control was quite basic, what I noticed. No one was wearing masks or anything like that. Cleaners, even nurses were coming in; you'd think when treating someone with their immune system being so low, infection prevention and control policies would have been better than that, to be honest. But we certainly scrubbed up when we came in, the family did. This is what I observed when I was in the hospital, it wasn't as good as other hospitals we've been in. When [REDACTED] was in Yorkhill all the staff would gown up, but we didn't see that much in the new hospital.
18. Knowing what we know now, they shouldn't have opened the hospital when they did. The things that are on my mind were whether the tests carried out on the water systems, gas systems, electrical systems were done right. It then leads you to think about why the Edinburgh hospital was closed for another year; why the bricks fell down at that primary school; and why Grenfell happened. All that stuff seems to be going the wrong way. To look at it, it's a super hospital. But there's obviously other issues that they're covering up. The whistle-blowers have come out and there are various stories going about.
19. If it's a water borne infection, the first question you ask is: where did it come from? There must have been an investigation done, there must have been some readings taken.
20. There's a lot of information out there about the hospital; bad information, good information, whatever you call it. There's a lot of bad vibes about the hospital out there. My daughter-in-law works in the Ambulance Service and she'd taken a patient to the hospital who worked in the Queen Elizabeth. She said

that the people in the hospital, running the hospital, knew what was going on. She told my daughter-in-law, it's just unreal, the things they're hearing. So it's like they've known about it from day one and it's just a big cover up from start to finish so far. Hopefully we'll get to the bottom of it. It's a long, drawn out process. It's a long way to go yet but hopefully we'll get there.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

21. The hospital was a super hospital, is a super hospital, and at the time was in we didn't think anything else other than that. When ██████ became seriously ill, it goes through your mind, "could it have been this, could it have been that, why were they doing this, why were they doing that?" You don't think for a minute that it's been a cover-up. That's how you're feeling.
22. The whistle-blowers have opened a can of worms. We don't know where it's going to end but we're looking for the truth and for somebody to admit that it was the water that's caused this.
23. Whatever happens, ██████'s not going to come back but we have to get the answers we're looking for and help other people, and hope they don't go through what we have.
24. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that this statement may form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry's website.