

Scottish Hospitals Inquiry

Witness Statement of

John Henderson

WITNESS DETAILS

1. My name is John Henderson. I was born on [REDACTED]. I am [REDACTED] years old. I am a retired doctor.
2. I live at my home in [REDACTED].

OVERVIEW

4. Following an operation for [REDACTED] at Gartnavel Hospital in Glasgow in April 2015, I was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (QEUH), where I spent several nights in ward 11D. I can speak to a number of issues about the condition of the hospital that caused me some concerns.

WITNESS BACKGROUND

5. Before my retirement, I had a long history in the health service, including spells as a doctor in different parts of the world, including the USA. I have therefore experienced a wide range of medical environments.

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6. Though I continue to undergo medical treatment at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, I am fine and I consider myself to be fortunate that there is treatment for my condition. I am active, though not as much as I once was.

EXPERIENCE AT QEUH

7. Following surgery at Gartnavel on 24 April 2015, I transferred to the QEUH on 27 April 2015. I was an in-patient in ward 11D for a few days. I can't recall precisely the length of my stay but it was less than a week, possibly 4 or 5 days.
8. I have no issues regarding my treatment in the hospital and indeed would commend both the staff and the amenities in the room that I was in in ward 11D. I can't recall the room number. I believe all the rooms in the ward were single rooms with en-suite facilities. It was very well appointed and a significant step up from the facilities that I had experienced in Gartnavel.
9. However, there were two issues that caused me concern and left me wondering if the hospital had in fact opened before it was ready.
10. My initial concerns related to the water supply in the ward. Early in the evening on the day of my arrival on 27 April 2015, a nurse or auxiliary advised me that there was no water supply and that they would not currently be able to fill my bedside water jug. They said that the problem was affecting taps and toilets, meaning that neither could be used while the issues were being investigated. It was suggested that if I had visitors coming to see me, I should ask them to bring bottled water with them for me. There was no mention of bottled water being provided by the hospital.

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11. There was no indication of how long the problem would last but I was told that plumbers were working on it. Though I was fine, my concern was about how other patients might be affected and also how staff would be able to maintain basic hygiene, when there was no running water. It was one thing patients and families being unable to have a cup of tea but not being able to wash hands or use the toilet was clearly not great, both for patients and staff, in a new hospital.
12. In the event, the supply failure lasted probably no more than an hour and a half that first evening. I was fortunate as I was able to contact my partner, who brought me water and in fact came in with a pack of a dozen or 18 half litre bottles of drinking water that I was able to use and also make available for other patients.
13. Though the problem was fixed reasonably quickly, it then recurred the next night, probably for 3 to 4 hours this time. Again, there wasn't any significant impact on me personally but I'm not sure about the wider impact. The message from the staff was pretty much the same as the previous night – that they didn't know how long the problem would last but that plumbers were again working on it.
14. I felt a bit for the staff as the problem was out of their control and they were just having to make the best of it. I believe I was in the first tranche of patients in the new hospital, so I don't imagine that the staff would have had much experience of the problems. I can't fault them as I don't believe that there was any more information they could share.
15. My second concern was about the external panels on the building. From the window of my room on 11th floor, I could see two elevations of what is an X-

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shaped building. I observed lengths of rubberised materials flying in the breeze. These looked like the materials that surrounded the external panels to seal them but they seemed to have come loose and some of the strips of rubber were several metres long. They seemed to be still attached at one point so were just blowing about with the wind.

16. I could also see that these rubber strips were loose around many of the panels, not just one or two. This made me wonder how safe this new building was. I wasn't certain how secure these large panels actually were and, at the very least, it seemed unlikely that they would remain water tight with all of these sealing materials already coming loose.
17. I took photographs of these loose seals around the exterior panels and have provided these to the Inquiry **[Picture JH/01 – at Appendix 1]**.
18. Since leaving the QEUH at the beginning of May 2015, I think I have had only one visit back there, to have [REDACTED] checked, as most of my ongoing treatment has been carried out at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. I cannot recall precisely when I was back at the QEUH but I did not observe anything untoward.

COMMUNICATION ISSUES

19. I have no concerns about communication while I was in the QEUH. Given my relatively short stay in the hospital, I did not raise anything about the external panels and the loose materials around them. I did however take photographs of what I saw that I can provide to the Inquiry.

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20. Similarly, it was clear that the problems with the water supply were outwith the nurses' control and I think that the staff were as open with me as they could be.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

21. It is my view that there were major issues with the hospital that raise questions about whether it was fit to open when it did. It occurred to me that the hospital opened during the Scottish election campaign which made me wonder if there were political reasons that stopped them delaying the hospital opening. I have no idea if there was a connection, but accepting patients when there were serious faults with the building can only add to the costs of putting things right.
22. 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.

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JH/01 – Appendix 1



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