



At inquest: Dr Peter Boylan

By Marese McDonagh

DHARA Kivlehan's death was due to medical misadventure, a jury has found following a five-day inquest.

Leading obstetrician Peter Boylan told the jury that a number of deficiencies contributed to Ms Kivlehan's death.

Dr Boylan cited the failure to consider the possibility of internal bleeding, the lack of intensive care beds at tertiary hospitals in Dublin and Galway, and the insufficient numbers of obstetric consultants in Sligo hospital as 'material contributors' to Ms Kivlehan's death.

Dr Boylan said Ms Kivlehan suffered a significant intra abdominal bleed after her emergency caesarean section. But her abdominal swelling was mistakenly attributed to ascites (fluid in the abdomen), probably in association with her liver failure.

Had this intra-abdominal haemorrhage been recognised and dealt with, and an earlier transfer to a tertiary centre organised, it was possible that the outcome might have

Widower: Don't be afraid to challenge doctors

Jury returns verdict of medical misadventure in dead mum's inquest



'She had brains and beauty': Michael Kivlehan and late wife Dhara

'Child birth is not always simple'

been different, he said. 'This however remains conjecture.'

After the inquest, Michael Kivlehan told other fathers not to be afraid to challenge doctors. He also spoke of his love for his wife saying that his son had her brains and her beauty. 'I would like to get the message out there to lay people that child birth is not always that simple,' he said.

'And to tell the fathers they need to be more supportive of their women, especially if they have any concerns - and to have the strength to challenge doctors.'

Referring to his experience of some staff in Sligo he said medics should improve their bedside manner.

Speaking after the verdict Coroner Eamon MacGowan wished the Kivlehan family peace, tranquillity and contentment.

'Michael has vindicated Dhara's life and explained it through his campaign to have this inquest heard. I am sorry it has taken four years to do so,' said Mr MacGowan.

Poignantly yesterday the 35-year-

old was carrying a montage of photographs of Dhara including one of the couple with their newborn son taken in Sligo hospital.

While Sunday was the fourth anniversary of Dhara's death, he said today was the real anniversary as far as he was concerned. 'Tuesday is the day they switched off the machine,' he said. Michael said his wife loved Ireland and had 'an Irish sense of humour'.

He said his son Dior had become aware of the publicity surrounding the inquest. 'When he sees her photograph on television he says 'there's Mammy' He says "Mammy is up in heaven".'

His solicitor Damien Tansey said it had been a David and Goliath battle. The jury made a number of key recommendations in response to the evidence, urging all hospital blood tests be followed up by the doctor who ordered them and that any critical issues be flagged by laboratory staff.

After just under an hour deliberating the jury of five men and to women also recommended that without delay, a database of all available critical care beds be made known to all hospitals, regional and national.

Obstetrician Dr Boylan told the jury it was impossible to know if

Dhara would have survived had she been transferred earlier to a specialist centre but that would have constituted the 'best possible care', he said. A delay in referring the young mother to both kidney and liver specialists were contributing factors in her death, the former master of Holes Streets said.

He agreed that the failure to organise any liver consult in Sligo regional hospital was 'unacceptable'.

Dhara Kivlehan, 29, died from multi organ failure due to HELLP syndrome, a severe form of pre-eclampsia, in Belfast's Royal Victoria University Hospital on September 28, 2010. She had been airlifted from Sligo Regional Hospital four days earlier. If Ms Kivlehan had been transferred earlier to a tertiary centre it might have made a difference to the outcome, Dr Boylan said. It was impossible to say if she would have recovered.

Under cross-examination, he told Adrienne Egan SC for the HSE that it would have been better 'but none of us can predict the outcome'. Everyone was entitled to the best possible care 'and the best available care was in a tertiary centre especially St Vincent's University hospital in Dublin'.

The consultant obstetrician gy-

naecologist agreed with Damien Tansey solicitor for the Kivlehan family he would have transferred the young mother after delivery.

Mr Tansey suggested that Dhara might never have been transferred if her husband Michael had not 'put his foot down when he saw his wife disappearing before his eyes'.

The consultant agreed with Mr Tansey a delay in acting on blood results taken when Dhara was admitted to the hospital on September 20 was 'certainly a deficiency in care'.

'A deficiency in care'

The inquest heard the results showing acute liver and kidney dysfunction were not accessed for 12 hours. Ms Egan told the jury this was one of the shortcomings the HSE had apologised for last December. Mr Kivlehan was awarded €800,000 under a High Court settlement.

Mr Tansey suggested if the blood tests had been acted on quickly, Dhara might have had an emergency caesarean section 12 hours earlier

and then staff could have focussed on her liver and kidney problems.

The former Master of the National Maternity Hospital said it was clear to him there were deficiencies both in Ms Kivlehan's clinical care, and also at systemic level, which were 'material contributors' to her death. The attribution by staff at Sligo Regional Hospital of all Ms Kivlehan's problems to HELLP syndrome was one of the deficits Dr Boylan cited.

Failure to seriously consider the possibility of intra-abdominal haemorrhage in the post operative period was also a contributing factor.

Among the system failures was a lack of continuity of care at consultant level. Pressed on what evidence there was of a lack of continuity of care by consultants in Ms Kivlehan's case, Dr Boylan pointed out that her consultant obstetrician Dr Raouf Sallam had to attend an outreach clinic the day after her delivery and many of the medical notes were by a registrar Dr Hind Al Husain. He said: 'A woman so seriously ill would be better off if there was continuity of care at senior consultant level.'

The consultant said it was an established fact that Ireland had the lowest number of consultants per head of population in the OECD.

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Vote for McNulty despite controversy, says Burton

JOAN Burton will tell her colleagues to vote for Fine Gael Seanad candidate John McNulty, despite raising concerns with the Taoiseach about the controversy over his appointment.

John McNulty was appointed to a State board in what was seen as a blatant attempt at boosting his chances of winning a Senate by-election, but he was later forced to resign from the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA).

Ms Burton said: 'I welcome the Taoiseach's statement on Friday clarifying the circumstances under which he proposed Mr McNulty for the Seanad. I have had an opportunity today to have a conversation

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with the Taoiseach because I am determined to see that we have procedures and processes that are clear to everybody.'

Ms Burton noted Public Expenditure and Reform Minister Brendan Howlin is now updating the rules on appointments to public bodies in the wake of the ongoing scandal.

However, she said she will still tell concerned Labour party members to vote in favour of Mr McNulty. She said: 'I anticipate that the members of the Government parties will support a Government candidate for the vacancy.'



Backing: Joan Burton

Retail sales drop in August but 'solid rise' on the way

IRISH retail sales have fallen for the month of August due mainly to a reduction in car sales, only a month after a 36 per cent rise in sales coinciding with the introduction of the new '142' reg.

A large number of consumers waited until July to purchase their cars so they could get the '142' prefix on their registration plates for those sold in the second half of the year.

According to the latest figures from the Central Statistics Office, retail sales figures for August show a decrease of 2.9 per cent in volume and 1.3 per cent in value for the month. However, annual figures show an increase of 6.8 per cent in volume

By Eamon Donoghue

and 5.3 per cent in value but when motor sales are excluded, sales volume was up 0.1 per cent and sales value was up 2.2 per cent in the year.

The Davy Group, Ireland's leading provider of wealth management, asset management and financial advisory services said: 'Over the year, retail sales are now up 6.8 per cent. However, the underlying picture continues to improve. Retail sales ex-motors are now up 3.7 per cent on the year, with broad-based growth evident across the sectors. Today's data therefore point to another solid rise in consumer spending in Q3.'