
under the Health and Disabilities Services Act 1993
in the matter of The Ministerial Inquiry into the Under-Reporting of
Cervical Smear Abnormalities

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BRIAN ROBERT MORRIS

Dated 2000

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Background and qualifications

- 1 My full name is Brian Robert Morris. I hold the position of Laboratory Manager at Gisborne Hospital. I have been employed by Tairāwhiti Healthcare Limited ("THL") since 1979 and have held the position of Laboratory Manager since June 1998. Prior to this, I was employed as the Charge Microbiologist in the Gisborne Hospital laboratory ("GHL").
- 2 My qualifications are Medical Laboratory Scientist (1975), specialist level microbiologist (1979) and a Diploma in Business Management (1990). I am a member of the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Scientists.

Assistance in preparing statement

- 3 In preparing this statement, I have been assisted by two other staff members of THL, Mrs Michelle Hooper and Mrs Lindsey Emmott.
- 4 Michelle supervises the histology department. She has been employed by THL since 1976.
- 5 Lindsey holds the position of secretary and is currently employed to type histology reports for the pathologist. Lindsey has been employed by THL since August 1988.
- 6 This statement has been prepared in response to a request from counsel assisting the inquiry. The request was made in a letter dated 14 January 2000, addressed to Dr Bruce Duncan, Clinical Director of the Public Health Unit, THL, from Ms Hanne Janes, counsel assisting the inquiry.

Brief history of Gisborne Hospital pathologists and histology/cytology services

- 7 Before Gisborne Hospital was built, hospital care at Gisborne was provided by Cook Hospital. Dr Bottrill worked as a pathologist at Cook Hospital. In 1974, Dr Bottrill left Gisborne Hospital and started his private laboratory in the business area of town.
- 8 Gisborne Hospital opened in 1985 on the present site. GHL provided all the diagnostic services from Hick's Bay in the north to as far south as Gisborne until Dr Bottrill opened his private laboratory in 1974.

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- 9 When Dr Bottrill set up his private laboratory, he provided work for all non-Gisborne Hospital cytology and histology, including work for Te Puia Hospital, the Special Area Doctors, as well as the local general practitioners (“GPs”). Both Te Puia Hospital and the Special Area Doctors are operated by THL. Gisborne Hospital maintained its own laboratory (GHL) for hospital laboratory work and some out-patient work.
 - 10 Prior to 1990, Dr Bottrill did some locum work for Gisborne Hospital when it was unable to provide its own full-time pathologist. Dr Bottrill’s locum work included periods from October 1986 to April 1987, and January 1988 to October 1988. Dr Bottrill also did the very occasional post-mortem. The last post-mortem he performed at Gisborne Hospital was prior to 1990. As far as I understand, and as far as THL has been able to ascertain, Dr Bottrill has not worked at GHL, formally or informally, since October 1988.
 - 11 Following Dr Bottrill’s departure, THL employed a number of permanent and locum pathologists.
 - 12 Dr McLatchie was employed as a permanent pathologist from approximately 1974 to 1985. After 1985, he continued in a locum capacity until October 1988 with a number of other pathologists including Doctors Bottrill, Sherard, Kirker and Beer.
 - 13 Dr Mahendra Singh was employed as a permanent pathologist from October 1988 until September 1990.
 - 14 From September 1990 to April 1991, Medlab Central in Palmerston North provided the diagnostic services for histology/cytology.
 - 15 In April 1991 Dr Chan started work as a permanent pathologist at GHL, and worked there until April 1992.
 - 16 From April 1992 until May 1993, Medlab Central in Palmerston North provided the histology/cytology reporting for Gisborne Hospital.
 - 17 In June 1993, Dr Alan Padwell commenced duties as a full-time pathologist at GHL and worked there until February 1997. During this time, when he was on leave or attending international conferences, THL employed two locum pathologists (Dr Mahendra Singh in September 1996 and Dr Danielle Peat in October 1996) and Medlab

Central in Palmerston North to provide the services to cover Dr Padwell's absences.

- 18 Following the resignation of Dr Padwell in February 1997, Medlab Central took over the diagnostic services for Gisborne Hospital histology/cytology and provided cover in the absence of an on-site pathologist.
- 19 From 11 March 1997 to 4 April 1997, THL employed Dr Kered James as a locum pathologist.
- 20 From 4 April to 18 April 1997, Dr Rosanna Lapham was employed as a locum pathologist. She then took a full-time position at THL/GHL on 7 November 1997. Between April and November 1997 pathology services were covered by Medlab Central in Palmerston North. Dr Lapham received temporary vocational registration from the New Zealand Medical Council ("the Medical Council") and was supervised by Dr Fred Mayall in Waikato as required by the Medical Council. This was managed by on-site visits and the use of telemedicine. Dr Lapham resigned in October 1998.
- 21 In October 1998, Dr Wayne Elmsly was appointed as a locum pathologist. Dr Elmsly left THL in November 1999.
- 22 From November 1999, Medlab Central has continued to provide diagnostic services for Gisborne Hospital.

History of Gisborne Hospital Laboratory

- 23 Prior to Dr Bottrill setting up his private laboratory, GHL provided all diagnostic services for the Eastland area. Following Dr Bottrill setting up his private laboratory, GHL worked independently of Dr Bottrill's private laboratory.
- 24 In March 1996 there was a change in the way THL received its funding, allowing GHL to compete for private work. As a result, GHL started performing private work for local GPs as well as the Special Area Doctors and Te Puia Hospital. Dr Bottrill sold his laboratory to Medlab Hamilton at about this time.
- 25 GHL was first accredited by International Accreditation New Zealand ("IANZ"), formerly known as TELARC, in 1990 and has maintained its accreditation status since that time.

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- 26 GHL has been accredited in all the major disciplines including biochemistry, microbiology, haematology and blood bank continuously (accreditation for biochemistry was temporarily suspended last year). The accreditation for cytology has been permanently suspended since the resignation of Dr Alan Padwell in February 1997. Dr Lapham, who took over from Dr Padwell in November 1997, made the decision not to read cervical smears at GHL because GHL's cytologist by this time had become sick and was unable to work for some time. Also, Dr Lapham felt there were insufficient numbers of smears coming into the laboratory to maintain competency. All the gynaecological cytology from that point on has been referred to Medlab Central, Palmerston North. Accreditation for histology and the mortuary has been suspended since the resignation of Dr Wayne Elmsly.
- 27 Double screening of cervical smears became mandatory before the departure of Dr Padwell. Mrs Fran Edwards (who was employed at GHL at the time and was qualified to screen) assisted Dr Padwell with the double screening at the required level.

Relationship with Dr Bottrill's laboratory prior to 1996

- 28 As stated above, GHL operated independently of Dr Bottrill's private laboratory. The relationship between the two laboratories could only be described as informal. There were times when reagents were provided to either laboratory when one was short of a particular item.
- 29 Dr Bottrill's laboratory made use of THL's services when the private laboratory's own instruments had a malfunction. There was a co-operative approach between the laboratories at the time. This was because, if the private laboratory was unable to provide the test, then a GP would have the patient admitted to Gisborne Hospital. GHL would then have to perform the tests anyway and by this time it would usually mean employing staff at over-time rates. Dr Bottrill's laboratory regularly used GHL for tests that his laboratory could not provide, including vitamins B12 and folate levels, hepatitis screening and thyroid function tests, as well as other tests that could not be claimed on the schedule. Some of these tests were performed using a gamma counter, which the private laboratory did not have at the time.
- 30 As stated above, as far as THL has been able to ascertain, Dr Bottrill did not provide, and was not involved in any way with, cytology/histology services at Gisborne Hospital/GHL from 1988.

The relationship with Dr Bottrill's laboratory post 1996

- 31 Dr Bottrill's laboratory, now owned by Medlab (Hamilton), still maintains a co-operative relationship with GHL, as required by either laboratory. This is usually by providing tests for each other due to instrument malfunctions and also includes after hours' services. This co-operation is possible now because both laboratories have the same accreditation status for the tests requested of each other.
- 32 Cytology screening has not been performed at GHL since Dr Alan Padwell left in 1997.

Events leading up to the discovery of the problems relating to reading of cervical smears

- 33 GHL was not aware of the problem because the two laboratories were independent from each other. GHL's first real involvement occurred in October 1998 when a GP made a request for a review of a cervical slide. The first two smears, in relation to this patient, were reported by Dr Bottrill. Events subsequent to this have been described by other THL witnesses and I do not propose to cover that ground again.

Have there been problems relating to smears by Dr Bottrill?

- 1 I am unable to comment on Dr Bottrill's problems because I was not aware of any specific concerns before October 1998. I regarded the review request as an isolated incident until further issues came to light in April 1999. Information arising after April 1999, and steps taken thereafter, are detailed by other witnesses and I have nothing to add to those issues.

Brian Robert Morris
Laboratory Manager

Dated: