

**Neutral Citation No: [2019] NICoroner 10**  
*Judgment: approved by the Court for handing down  
(subject to editorial corrections)\**

**Ref: 2019NICoroner10**

**Delivered: 2<sup>nd</sup> September  
2019**

**IN THE CORONERS COURT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

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**IN THE MATTER OF AN INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF  
WILLIAM BARKLEY MCKINNEY**

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**Before: Coroner Mr Patrick McGurgan**

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[1] The deceased, William Barkley McKinney, born on 23rd September 1947, of 89 Mullan Road, Ballymoney, died on 24th June 2018.

[2] On the 18th June 2018, the deceased, together with his friend Mr Wallace Nesbitt, were working at the deceased's farm. During the day the deceased and Mr Nesbitt brought some cattle into a yard with the intention of placing a heifer in the crush to examine the position of its calf as it was close to calving. During this manoeuvre the heifer, followed by some bullocks, charged towards the deceased and he stumbled backwards falling onto the concrete yard. The heifer ran over the top of him and he hit his head on the ground. Mr Nesbitt pulled the deceased to safety, secured the cattle and then took the deceased to Ballymoney Clinic. At this time the deceased was conscious and bleeding from a wound on the back of his head.

[3] The clinic re-directed the deceased to Causeway Hospital due to the nature of the head wound. As a result Mr Nesbitt drove the deceased to Causeway Hospital.

[4] In her evidence to the Inquest, Dr Rebecca Donaghy, stated that on 18th June 2018 the deceased came to the emergency department and explained the circumstances as to how he had sustained his head injury. He also explained that he was on Warfarin for his mechanical heart valve. There was no loss of consciousness, no nausea, vomiting or confusion. The deceased did complain of a headache. On examination the deceased was fully alert and orientated and neurologically everything was normal. His GCS was 15/15. As the head wound was quite deep, Dr Donaghy sought advice from a Consultant, Dr Arshad, and they assessed the wound together.

[5] Dr Arshad advised closure of the wound with staples and Dr Arshad proceeded with staples assisted by Dr Donaghy. Blood tests and a CT scan were performed and the CT scan was normal. Head injury advice was discussed with the deceased's daughter and printed head injury advice given. The deceased was then discharged.

[6] The deceased's INR was higher than the target range of 3.5 and was reading 6.1. Dr Donaghy therefore telephoned the deceased and advised no further warfarin for 2 days and then his INR was to be checked again at his pre-arranged warfarin clinic appointment. The deceased stayed with his daughter, Mrs Ann Connolly, that night. Both had some lunch the following day and the deceased did not make any specific complaints but for a headache which improved after taking some pain-killing medication.

[7] Following spending some time at his son's property that evening, the deceased retired to his own property.

[8] On Wednesday 20th June 2018, Mrs Connolly tried to contact the deceased by telephone at around 9.20-9.30am. There was no answer and so Mrs Connolly went to her father's address. On arrival her sister in law was already present and the two went into the property together. Mrs Connolly could hear what she believed to have been snoring and as she went up the hall of the property she discovered the deceased on the floor. His body was in the hall and his legs in the sitting room. He was dressed in a polo top which he would wear during the day and his pyjama bottoms. He was unresponsive. Emergency services were tasked and the deceased was taken to Causeway Hospital.

[9] In his evidence to the Inquest, Dr Garth Fulton, Staff Grade Doctor in Emergency Medicine, stated that on arrival at ED the deceased's GCS was 4/15, BP was 186/96 and heart rate 68bpm. He had a dilated right pupil. A CT brain scan was arranged and it showed a subdural haemorrhage with subarachnoid haemorrhage and mass effect. His condition was discussed with the Neurosurgical team in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast and it was deemed that surgery would not be of benefit.

[10] The deceased was treated palliatively and life was pronounced extinct at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine at 9.25am on 24th June 2018.

[11] In his evidence to the Inquest, Mr David Lowe of the Health and Safety Executive for NI explained that he had attended the property and prepared a report following an investigation. He concluded that at the time the deceased had been aware of the aggressive tendencies of the heifer in question as it was in calf and that he and Mr Nesbitt had taken all reasonably practical precautions when handling the animal and that on another day the heifer would have turned away from the deceased as opposed to knocking him over.

[12] I find on the balance of probabilities that the deceased sustained a head injury due to being knocked over by a heifer in calf on the 18th June. The deceased

underwent a CT scan which was appropriate and the results were normal. Dr Donaghy followed NICE guidelines as regards her treatment of the deceased in the context of him being on warfarin but he developed a subdural haematoma over the next few days and was found collapsed on 20th June 2018.

[13] In her evidence to the Inquest, Dr Orlaith Scullion explained that following this tragedy a level one Serious Audit Enquiry was conducted. Flowing from that a new policy has been developed and implemented in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to be followed in patients presenting with a head injury when on warfarin. This means that such patients would now be admitted for a period of observation until their INR target level was reached. I commend this policy.

[14] A post-mortem was performed and it records and I find that death was due to:

I(a) Subdural Haemorrhage, Bruising and Oedema of Brain.

II. Warfarin Therapy