PERSONAL ACCOUNT

My grandson could have been one of Lucy Letby’s victims

The birth of a baby is a time filled with joy and fear, and my family experienced both when my daughter had an emergency caesarean section in 2015. Shortly after giving birth, she suffered a life-threatening postpartum haemorrhage, and my grandson experienced a sudden deterioration in his respiration, requiring emergency admission to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at the Countess of Chester Hospital. He was invasively ventilated and spent several days on the unit, alternating between progressing and deteriorating.

During this time we witnessed moments of distress, especially following the death of a baby who had been progressing well. A brief time passed and my grandson recovered and was discharged home, the whole family felt a deep gratitude for the NICU’s care and accordingly did fundraising events for the unit.

Police made contact

What followed over the past two years has shaken our whole family. A surprise contact made by police officers to my daughter and her family raised the awareness of potential wrong doings on the NICU during his admission to the hospital. A source told the newspaper that detectives had identified about 30 babies who suffered ‘suspicious’ incidents at the hospital, with Letby found to be on duty for each of these incidents.

Reviewing care of 4,000

Detectives are reviewing the care of 4,000 babies admitted to hospital while Letby was a neonatal nurse in Chester and Liverpool. The government has ordered an inquiry into the circumstances of the case.

Letby has become the most prolific convicted child serial killer in modern British history. Her refusal to appear in court has prompted the government to look at changing the law to ensure criminals attend their sentencing in court, Downing Street has said.

The whole life sentence means Letby will never leave prison. She is only the fourth woman in UK history to receive such a sentence.

The name of this nurse author has been withheld to protect the anonymity of the family

LUCY LETBY

Whole life sentence for murder and attempted murder

Lucy Letby has been given a whole life sentence for the murders of seven babies.

Letby was found guilty on 18 August of the murder of seven babies and attempted murder of six other babies while she worked as a nurse on the neonatal unit of the Countess of Chester Hospital.

Speaking at Manchester Crown Court on 21 August some of the families of Letby’s victims told her ‘you are nothing’ and ‘you are evil’ as she refused to appear in court for sentencing.

In 2015 and 2016 there was a significant rise in the numbers of babies who suffered serious and unexpected collapses in the neonatal unit at the Countess of Chester Hospital in Chester. Letby was the only member of the nursing and clinical staff who was on duty each time the collapses happened.

She used various ways to harm the babies including injecting air into the bloodstream or stomach, overfeeding with milk, physical assault and poisoning with insulin. Some of the children were subjected to repeated attempts to kill them, the trial at Manchester Crown Court heard.

The Guardian reported on 20 August that police fear Letby may have harmed dozens more infants at the hospital. A source told the newspaper that detectives had identified about 30 babies who suffered ‘suspicious’ incidents at the hospital, with Letby found to be on duty for each of these incidents.

The verdict has, in part, enabled my family to reconcile that justice has been done, but neither my daughter nor her husband any longer feel that they can trust the healthcare system. They cannot look at photographs of their son’s days in the NICU, haunted by what might have been and how lucky they are to have him. We are all so grateful for his life but in some ways feel guilty that other parents are not so fortunate.

While the Letby case has been a personal tragedy for families, including my own, it serves as a reminder of the importance of vigilance and whistleblowing in healthcare. We must continue to strive for excellence in patient care and hold ourselves accountable for any wrongdoing or malpractice.

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