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SC.39.03/NH.cg

25th May 2011

Dear Mr McGinty

Re: Death of Dr David KELLY

Many thanks for affording me the opportunity to write to you regarding this matter. As discussed in our telephone conversation I do not propose to provide a detailed critique of the memorial submitted to the Attorney General as I understand that the case is subject to a review conducted by Dr Richard Shepherd.

1. The investigation of suspicious deaths in England and Wales is tasked to a number of approved forensic pathologists who are expected to undergo specific training and gain particular experience in the investigation of such deaths prior to their accreditation and inclusion on the register. To my knowledge none of the individuals concerned in producing this document is a forensic pathologist. Indeed I have received nothing but the express support of my colleagues and, in particular, the current President of the British Association in Forensic Medicine and the immediate three past Presidents. As a point of fact it was with Dr Cary, the current President of the British Association in Forensic Medicine, that I discussed the case prior to issuing my report as is normal practice in any complex or high profile case. The group of Doctors who appear to be driving this are offering apparently authoritative and 'expert' commentary far outwith their own fields of practise. It has been pointed out by a number of my colleagues that in doing so their actions ought to be reported to the General Medical Council and where appropriate the NPIA. To date I have not taken any action on this front though others appear inclined to do so.

2. Having given evidence at numerous Coroners' Courts around the country during the course of my career, it is my experience that the nature and extent of the questions asked is quite variable. Based upon this experience it is my opinion that the nature and extent of the questioning at the Hutton Inquiry was appropriately thorough and indeed rather more rigorous than the majority of Inquests that I attend. At no time did I form the opinion that the exploration of the evidence of fact and opinion was below the standards of the more assiduous full time Coroners that I have appeared before.
3. With respect to my answer to Lord Hutton in which I made reference to ignoring other features of the case, this was a reference to the political scenario, the high profile nature of the case and the intense speculation of the media and conspiracy theorists. As a forensic pathologist I am well aware of my over-riding duty to the Courts to provide impartial and objective evidence which I have done in respect of this case. I cannot allow my private views or political persuasion (in my case emphatically not with the Government of the time) to colour my judgement and have never done so in this or any other case. Indeed I am told my reputation with the Judiciary is that I am fair minded, objective and impartial.
4. With respect to the matter raised by Mr Nicholas Gardiner, HM Coroner for Oxfordshire, I cannot second guess exactly what he meant. However I assume it to mean reference to the fact that whilst I issued a preliminary cause of death it was made quite clear that this was only such and the final cause of death required toxicological and histological examination, as is entirely appropriate for a multi-factorial death of this nature. Far from being unusual, this is a relatively frequent occurrence in my practise.

I trust that these observations are of some utility to the Attorney General but if any further matter requires clarification I would be very happy to provide this.

Yours sincerely

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