

Dia dhaoibh go léir agus míle buíochas as bheith anseo inniu. Is aoibhinn liom cuireadh a bheith libh chun cainte anseo agus mé ag súil le roinnt smaointe ag roinnt linn inniu.

Good morning to all members of this Committee. Thank you for having these life-saving hearings on sepsis today and thank you to the organizers for inviting my wife Orlaith and me to speak.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Ciaran Staunton and I'm here today with my wife Orlaith. I'm a native of County Mayo and my wife is from County Louth,. Our daughter Kathleen is also here today. We want to speak to you about sepsis and to speak about sepsis for our family, is to specifically speak about our son Rory who tragically died from undiagnosed and untreated sepsis in 2012. Our daughter Kathleen was only 10 years old when she had to bury her brother. Many of you know our tragic story, but it is important to keep telling what happened to him because tragically his death should never have happened, and should never happen anywhere, and this is why we are here today to ensure that what happened to Rory does not happen again in any hospital in Ireland.

Rory Staunton was 12 years old when he died. Rory loved Ireland, he came here every summer, travelling all over from Ballydavid to Westport to Drogheda. Indeed, he was a guest here in the Dail many times with his uncle Deputy Fergus O Dowd. Rory is an Irish Citizen and is buried with his grandparents in Drogheda.

Rory was a very healthy child. He was 5ft 9 tall, had broad shoulders, big kid. One day, he scraped his arm playing basketball at school in Queens, New York, overnight, he spiked a fever and the next day we brought him to his paediatrician and then to the emergency department at a major New York Hospital where each medical professional who examined him dismissed our concerns and sent him home with a diagnosis of 'gastric flu'. Rory, however, was very sick and the following day when his symptoms worsened, we returned to the hospital where he was admitted to the ICU. That was Friday and on Sunday, April 1st, 2012 Rory died from septic shock.

When we were told that Rory died from sepsis, we had never heard the word. In fact, as Rory lay dying in the hospital the word 'sepsis' was never even uttered.

We discovered that if his condition had been accurately diagnosed when we first sought medical attention, he would be alive today. I have given many speeches about Rory's death but I will never be able to verbalize the agonizing pain of child loss and the struggle to keep going, particularly when we think: *His life could have been saved.*

Tragically, since Rory's death, we have heard different versions of his story repeated again and again, and specifically in Ireland where patients and families who had never heard of sepsis, had their symptoms missed and their concerns dismissed by healthcare providers, resulting in lives needlessly cut short and families left broken.

In a recent interview with RTE News ,Dr Steve Kerrigan of the Royal College of Surgeons stated that the Health Service Executive (HSE) sepsis figures for the year 2021 show that over 13,300 patients were treated for sepsis in public hospitals in Ireland and of these patients, 2,700 died. That is one in five patients who have a sepsis diagnosis in Ireland dying every year of the condition. These figures are not improving.

When Rory died in New York we embarked on a campaign to end preventable deaths from sepsis. We started in New York State where in 2013 a series of protocols were introduced statewide for the recognition and treatment of sepsis named Rory's Regulations. These protocols have saved thousands of lives since their inception. I would like to briefly speak to them today and to recommend that these regulations and the accompanying Parents Bill of Rights be used as a baseline for care of sepsis here in Ireland.

<https://www.endsepsis.org/work/sepsis-protocols/>