

€740k award for boy over birth brain injury

A SIX-YEAR-OLD boy has been awarded an interim payment of €740,000 in damages over mistakes made during his birth at Sligo General Hospital.

The High Court was told medics failed to act on abnormal readings of Evan Deane's heart rate, and should have delivered him 90 minutes earlier than they did.

The court heard he had suffered a lack of oxygen in the womb, which left him brain injured.

Judge Kevin Cross, who approved the settlement offer, commended the attitude of the HSE in the case. He had been told that the family had been given an apology and an explanation of what happened as part of the mediation settlement talks.

'That is absolutely something to be encouraged,' he said, and

By Helen Bruce

'thankfully was becoming more and more common.'

The judge was told Evan, originally from Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, but now living in Canada with his family, was born on May 2, 2010, at Sligo General.

His mother Tara McGrath had been admitted at 1.45am, after her waters broke. At 2.15pm, the court heard, a CTG trace of the foetal heart rate showed extreme decelerations. The trace improved for a period, but from 4.20pm onwards it was claimed the decelerations became more marked and more frequent.

Despite this trace, midwives did not contact the obstetrical registrar, which Evan's legal team said should have been done by

5.20pm. Further decelerations were noted by midwives at the commencement of pushing at 6pm and were said to continue after this point.

The obstetrical registrar was called at 6.50pm, and a decision was made to proceed with an instrumental delivery. Evan was born at 7.25pm. It was argued Evan should have been delivered by 5.50pm, but was not delivered until some 95 minutes later, causing him around 90 additional minutes of asphyxia - lack of oxygen - which led to his injuries.

Michael Cush SC, for Evan and his mother, said the boy had cerebral palsy, but that had made great progress. Mr Cush said the family was happy with the settlement and with the way senior HSE personnel handled the case.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Without books life is pathetic and impotent

IT is a simple truth that I owe my life to books. Through books, I secured a career, first, as an academic, and then as a journalist and writer. Without them, I would not be who I am.

I clearly remember the very first books I owned and read.

Enid Blyton's Noddy and Brer Rabbit were among my most treasured possessions.

So, too, were the first editions of the Mr Men books, all of which are still read by my youngest son.

For me, books opened up a world in which I saw my own potential unfold. They gave me a sense of belonging, of history and identity. They connected me to the past in a way which enabled me to understand it.

Books were never an optional extra in my life, but the very things which shaped my vision, philosophy and values.

What's more, they were alive with their authors' intentions, feelings and beliefs. That is because, in reading a book, you quite literally engage with the soul of the author. However long dead, an author is still very much alive in his or her works.

The great voices of the ages still resound in the seminal texts of our civilisation.

Homer, Christ, Dante and Shakespeare continue to speak to us through their ancient pages. We are, in essence, a people of the book.

I am writing this in my study which contains my library. My boys love to wander in and stare at the nicely bound volumes of philosophy, poetry and politics. Each one, I tell them, contains a unique perspective on life - a vision as real now as when it was first composed.

The late American philosopher, Richard Rorty, once said that we are the books we have read. The views we hold, our 'take' on life and our moral outlook, is determined by those authors to which we have devoted time. That is why, when we cease to read, we cease to understand who we are and what we stand for.

As it happens, this process appears to be well under way. A recent survey, carried out by insurance provider Aviva, found that one in ten British people does not own a single book. Alarming, that figure soars to one in five of 18-24-year-olds.

The survey also revealed that the average household is, at any one time, connected to eight internet devices. Almost half of households reported that, even when they are all at home, family members continue to text each other.

Responding to the survey, British educationalist Jim Rose remarked: 'We are in serious trouble. We have entered the era of the Argos catalogue family: those with no books of their own at home.'

As a secondary schoolteacher, Mrs Dooley increasingly encounters this

sad phenomenon. Students spend so much of their spare time 'plugged in', that they have neither the interest nor the concentration to devote to books. Why bother reading a book when, if required, you can get a quick-fix summary online?

The results are tragically predictable: declining literacy, zero concentration and a total disconnect from anything that happened before they were born. They read what they must to pass the exams, after which they never consult a book again. How can young people possibly function as responsible citizens when they know so little about the society in which they live?

The decline of religion stems largely from the fact that we no longer read sacred texts.

When Shakespeare is optional in our schools, and when historical biographies are a quaint curiosity, how can we hope to sustain the cultural ecology which has brought us this far? Without books, we have no real sense of where we belong and how we fit in.

Either way, you might say that the age of the printed book is at an end. In this age of 'progress', we are all destined to download our books onto our screens and Kindles. Recently, even I was grateful when Mrs Dooley gave me a Kindle for my birthday.

THAT may be so for people of my generation and older, but it does not seem to be the case with the children of 'Cyberia'. If our boys love their books, it is because they have been consistently reared on bedtime stories. They see books as an extension of their father's limbs, something essential to a happy life.

For many of their peers, however, books have no place in a world dominated by devices. This is a world from which the dead no longer speak to us. It is a world bereft of those stories, characters and insights which broaden the mind and enhance love, honour and virtue.

If we are the books we have read, what are we when we cease reading them? We are exiles from history, culture and thought. We are strangers both to ourselves and to the surrounding society.

The essence of a book is not how it appears, but in the message it contains. In opening its pages, you bring to life the author and there is a powerful meeting of minds. And when you close it for the last time, that message takes on new life in you.

This means that the dead live on in us. But what happens when we refuse to let them in? What happens when we no longer let them breathe by reading what they have to say?

They perish and, in a certain sense, so do we. The light goes out and we die to everything that connects us to life, memory and meaning.

We know this because we have been here before: we call it the Dark Ages.

mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie

A HUGE THANK YOU
from Polly to everyone who came to see the
Olympia Panto.
Looking forward to seeing you all for
POLLY and the BEANSTALK
on sale
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Al Porter

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