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ERRORS COST MY GIRL HER LIFE

LESSONS have been learned from the death of teenager Charlotte Hartey, who was misdiagnosed with swine flu.

Speaking after the inquest into her death, father Karl vowed to continue to work with health authorities to make sure the same mistakes are not made again.

● Full story – pages 6-7

Dad says campaign will go on after swine flu mistake

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News round-up

Charlotte Hartey inquest

'WE MUST LEARN FROM MISTAKES'

'Good lessons have been learnt, but at the cost of Charlotte's life' – Karl Hartey, father

A TEENAGER who died after she was mis-diagnosed with swine flu may have survived if she had received the correct treatment an inquest has heard.

Charlotte Hartey, from Bronygarth, near Weston Rhyn, died in July 2009 at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital after she contracted an incredibly rare bacterial infection due to complications arising from tonsillitis.

Recording that Charlotte died from natural causes, North Shropshire Coroner, Mr John Ellery said: "The evidence indicated that the [swine flu] diagnoses were responsible ones to have made at the time, but later investigation indicated that they were probably incorrect.

"If different diagnoses had been made and treated accordingly it is possible that Charlotte may have survived," he added.

Last week's inquest in Shrewsbury heard that 16-year-old Charlotte was wrongly diagnosed with swine flu following a telephone conversation between her

mother, Helen, and Dr Michael Arthur from The Caxton Surgery, Oswestry on July 22. This was later confirmed by another doctor following a home visit two days later.

But following slight improvement, she deteriorated and on July 29 was admitted to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital where she died on July 31.

Concerns

Mr Ellery added: "Whilst there were significant issues and concerns at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital as to the process of information, treatment and ward allocation, the evidence indicated that Charlotte was at the time of admission unlikely to have survived."

Some of the concerns he had raised over the two-day inquest included issues in hospital record keeping, failures in the nursing care and breakdown in communication between doctors and with the family.

Following the verdict, Charlotte's father, Karl, said: "I think we have got the answers we were looking for.

"This has been difficult for everyone concerned, but we had to ask the questions and they had to be answered."

But he added that although the

inquest was now over, he would continue liaising with the Primary Care Trust to ensure the recommendations made following both an internal and external report would be carried out.



Steve Evans, Medical Director of The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, said: "The inquest has shown that even though some aspects of Charlotte's care could have been improved, sadly the outcome would almost certainly have been the same. "The local NHS has learned lessons from Charlotte's case and has already implemented the recommendations made by the external review into her death," he added.

● **Questions answered:** Karl Hartey leaves the Shrewsbury inquest last week.

Stories by:
EMILY DAVIES
and
DAVID LAWSON

Doctor breaks down in tears

A DOCTOR who treated Charlotte at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital broke down in tears as she spoke at the inquest into the teenager's death.

Dr Saskia Jones-Perrott admitted not reading the 16-year-old's notes, therefore missing crucial blood tests ordered by the family GP the previous day which revealed how incredibly ill she was.

The consultant physician admitted being "horrified" when she discovered the mistake, but that the practice at the time was for a junior doctor to read the notes to their senior.

She said her practice had now changed as "you cannot rely on anyone to take the notes down" but added she could "appreciate nothing can make this better" for the Hartey family, before apologising to Helen Hartey, Charlotte's mother, as she returned to her seat on the second day of the inquest at Shrewsbury.

GP followed guidelines

AN OSWESTRY GP who diagnosed Charlotte Hartey with swine flu was following government guidelines.

Giving evidence at the inquest into the Oswestry School pupil's death, Dr Michael Arthur from the Caxton Surgery said that when he diagnosed her the guidance being sent to doctors surgeries was "changing daily."

He told the inquest that on the afternoon of July 22 it was his turn to make follow-up calls to patients who had called the surgery saying they were suffering from flu-like symptoms.

Dr Arthur, who spoke to Charlotte's mother, Helen, over the telephone, as was the practice at that time, said that the 16-year-old was feeling unwell, with a sore throat, cough, fever and runny nose, but that the last of

those symptoms was "crucial" in diagnosing her with swine flu.

He said that as the teenager had been to surgery on several previous occasions between March and June with a persistent cough, he prescribed her Tamiflu, which was being used to treat the viral infection at the time, as the guidelines stated it should be given to patients with previous respiratory problems.

Home visit

Dr Arthur added that as the guidelines had changed at the time of Charlotte's diagnosis, it was not practice to swab to confirm that patients had the virus and he had no further contact with her following the telephone conversation.

The inquest heard that two days later his colleague, Dr

David Campbell made a visit to the Hartey's family home after Mrs Hartey called again to say Charlotte was still unwell.

Although he agreed with Dr Arthur's diagnosis he prescribed antibiotics to treat suspected laryngitis, but although she made some improvements over the next few days, Charlotte had deteriorated by July 28.

Dr Campbell made another home visit on that day, taking swab and blood tests and the following day telephoned the surgery on his day off to find out the results. It was at that point that he made another home visit and told Charlotte and her mother that the teenager should be admitted to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Tragedy timeline

July 2009

- As swine flu spreads across the UK, reports of outbreaks reach the outskirts of the Oswestry area
- July 22: Charlotte Hartey is taken ill, diagnosed with the H1N1 influenza or 'swine flu' over the phone by Dr Michael Arthur and prescribed Tamiflu.
- July 24: Charlotte's mother requests a home visit although Dr David Campbell agrees with previous diagnoses suspects possible laryngitis and prescribes antibiotics.
- July 28: Blood tests are taken.
- July 29: Charlotte's condition worsens and blood tests show she is extremely ill and is admitted to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital where her condition is diagnosed as tonsillitis.
- July 31: 5am, Charlotte is rushed into the operating room, but passes away at 9.15am.

August 2009

- A post mortem concludes Charlotte's death was caused by bilateral bronco pneumonia with multiple lung abscesses caused by an infection.
- Further tests are carried out and the Primary Care Trust begin their own review.
- August 13: A funeral for Charlotte is held at St John's Church, Weston Rhyn attended by more than 250 family and friends.
- A Facebook campaign opposing over the phone diagnosis attracts more than 1,000 signatures in its first few weeks.
- In an emotive video message on YouTube, Charlotte's father appeals for people's support for the petition.
- North Shropshire MP Owen Paterson petitions the Health Secretary for a review of telephone diagnosis and of Charlotte's case.

September 2009

- American news networks pick up on the story and campaign.
- Charlotte's family launch the Charlotte Hartey Foundation to support local charities.
- The online petition passes 3,000 signatures.
- Foundation charity bands designed by one of Charlotte's friends go on sale as far afield as Bishops Castle.
- Total funds raised by the foundation pass £1,500

November 2009

- Karl Hartey announces talks with Dr Rashmi Shukla, regional director of public health in the West Midlands.
- A meeting is organised with the help of MP Owen Paterson following a productive meeting with health minister Andy Burnham.

April 2010

- The Department of Health commissions its own independent report into the circumstances surrounding Charlotte's death.

September 2010

- Results of the Department of Health's report are announced, identifying 12 key points in system during the lead up to her death which need to be addressed.
- As a result of the Department's report an inquest is announced, scheduled to begin in November.

Rare infection killed teenager

Inquest told of time delay that led to tragedy

AN "INCREDIBLY rare" bacterial infection contributed to the death of Charlotte Hartey last year an inquest has heard.

Pathologist Dr Kenneth Scott said he had never come across the bacteria in his career, as had none of the other doctors who treated her bar one, who was not at the inquest, but who had told his colleagues he had seen it 15 years ago in a teenage boy who was also from Weston Rhyn.

The court also heard that the doctor in question believed that if the infection was treated in time, there was an 84 per cent chance of survival.

Dr Scott said that although the antibiotics given to Charlotte at

the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital should have worked, there was a possibility that other organisms had been produced to prevent this from happening.

Mis-diagnosis

He confirmed that the 16-year-old had died from natural bronchial pneumonia and multiple lung abscesses caused by an abscess on her right tonsil, but added there was no evidence of the 16-year-old suffering from a flu virus of any sort after being mis-diagnosed with swine flu by a GP at her Oswestry surgery.

The inquest also heard that in Dr Scott's opinion by the time Charlotte was admitted to hospital

on July 29, she was "extremely ill" and it was "highly unlikely" that she would have survived.

But he added: "If the correct diagnosis had been made and the correct antibiotics given at the correct time and in the correct dosage, Charlotte may have survived."

He also admitted their had been some "errors" by his team who had measured Charlotte's height incorrectly and he admitted a blood test he had taken never came back, though he did not know why.

Karl Hartey, Charlotte's father told the inquest that mistake was one of the reasons he had doubted the original cause of death and why he had pursued the need for a full inquest.

Hospital to make changes following school girl's death

A NUMBER of recommendations have been made to the treatment of patients following the death of Charlotte Hartey.

Peter Foord, Risk Advisor for the Shropshire County Primary Care Trust said that an investigation into the schoolgirl's death had raised a number of questions for the Trust.

These included the breakdown in communication between doctors at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, and also misunderstandings between hospital staff and the Hartey family, the administration of antibiotics, and the clinical judgement of the GP who diagnosed her with swine flu.

Mr Foord also told the inquest 12 recommendations had been made by an external review into Charlotte's death, which included the use of 'sepsis bundles', which have since been introduced by the hospital and would have recognised the seriousness of the 16-year-old's condition, and also the introduction of an 'oxygen champion', who would have been able to give the schoolgirl better care when her oxygen levels fell.

Karl Hartey, Charlotte's father, said he would continue to liaise with Mr Foord to ensure these changes were implemented and Mr John Ellery, Coroner for North Shropshire said he would be compiling a report to be sent to the Chief Executive of the Trust, as well as the Care Quality Commission and the National Patient Safety Agency.

'Charlotte may have survived if...'
- Doctor

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Charlotte's memory lives on in village church

THE end of the inquest comes just a few short weeks after what would have been Charlotte's 18th birthday.

To mark the occasion, friends and family came together at St John's Church in Weston Rhyn last month, where the Charlotte Hartey Foundation, started after her death, unveiled a stained glass window installed in her memory.

During the months since her death, friends have continued to leave personal messages and birthday wishes to Charlotte on her Facebook page, and after lighting candles in the church, the congregation gathered outside for a special tribute: "It would have been her 18th birthday," explained Karl, "So together we lit 18 Chinese lanterns which we released into the sky. Each one was a small gift to her."

Other permanent memorials have been made in Charlotte's name at

Oswestry School where she was a pupil. Karl Hartey presented a trophy to the school's First XI Football Team following their recent win over the Foundation's own side in a charity match. The school has also received a silver salva in recognition of their support to the Foundation. Karl adding: "We wanted to thank Oswestry School for all they have raised, and continue to

raise and hope the salver can be passed on next year to either a group, or a person, for their generous fundraising on behalf of the foundation."

The foundation has received funds from groups as diverse as the Zurich Community Trust, Orange and Milanos, through to WI groups, personal offerings and donations from people attending Applewood seminars, while events and collection boxes have helped raise thousands of pounds, from five-year-old Elis Hartey-Morrow of Gobowen raising £29.73 selling ice creams, to Samantha Roberts raising £855 by walking up Snowdon.

Karl Hartey and Rev Stuart Jermy of St John's Church, will be following Samantha up Snowdon on December 4, cycling up the mountain and raising funds for both church building work and foundation funds.



● **Memorial:** Family and friends release Chinese lanterns after the memorial service.

'Closure' for family

THE father of Charlotte Hartey believes lessons have been learnt from his daughter's death last year.

Speaking at the end of the two-day inquest held in Shrewsbury last week, Karl Hartey said: "Good lessons have been learnt, but at the cost of Charlotte's life."

Mr Hartey also said that it was difficult to apportion blame, but said he felt the swine flu guidelines sent out by the government had led to Charlotte's mis-diagnosis and that a breakdown in communication at the hospital was "a huge mistake" and a "breach of care."

But he stated he would continue

to liaise with the Primary Care Trust to ensure changes happened: "I haven't done this for the fun of it because I'm not a lawyer, but I won't allow [the local NHS] to put it under the carpet."

"It was only under cross examination that we found out that the 'intensive' training that has been recommended for all doctors has only been given to junior doctors, when it should be given to all," he added.

Praising Mr John Ellery, Coroner for North Shropshire, Mr Hartey said he was pleased with how the inquest had been conducted and said Mr Ellery had asked some

good questions: "If he is asking them, then they must be questions that need asking - I appreciate that he let me ask the questions and let me run with the questions."

He added that now the inquest was over Charlotte's family could finally have closure and get on with their lives following 15 months of asking questions: "I have put a lot of energy into this and I hope I have done a good enough job for Charlotte."

"We all miss her, but she will always be in are hearts and I hope through the Foundation trust set up in her name we can help others," he added.

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