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Keeping Nairn in the name — page 5

Designed in Nairn — page 6

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CANCER JAB PLEA

A Nairnshire mother is claiming anti cancer injections left her young daughter crippled with pain for many months and is urging others to demand all the facts about possible side effects when considering the merits of the vaccine.

A three-jab course of Cervarix has been widely administered to 12 and 13-year-old girls since 2008 as part of a UK immunisation programme.

The drug's manufacturer says it offers protection from the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), the most common cause of cervical cancer.

The UK and Scottish governments both insist it is safe, despite thousands of recipients reporting a wide range of adverse reactions to it.

Nairn Academy third year pupil Deborah Halliday, 14, opted out of having her third injection last winter; however, having suffered a string of health problems apparently culminating in virtual paralysis.

The slim and previously fit and sporty teenager has endured severe pain and many sleepless nights. Her mother Sherrel is convinced her ordeal was due to an adverse reaction to the vaccine.

Within hours of the initial injection she says Deborah experienced muscle pain, swollen joints and stiff limbs. Severe fatigue set in over the next three months. She also suffered chest compression, low blood sugar, headaches, dizziness and nausea.

Mrs Halliday, who nursed her daughter and has extensively researched

issues surrounding the drug, has reluctantly gone public.

She told the Nairnshire: "We both feel the same. If we don't speak out, her pain and suffering could happen to others. Other children have had it with no reaction, but it's maybe not a vaccine that's suitable for everyone.

Mrs Halliday believes there is a link to aluminium poisoning and there is an unusual remedy. "The antidote, for the last 22 weeks, has been to drink Volvic water — which is rich in silica — and a diet featuring silica-rich foods such as onions, potatoes, cabbage and berries along with both physio and hydrotherapy.

"There has been a considerable change in her quality of life in that time."

Mrs Halliday claimed that advance notice of potential side-effects was minimal and that she has subsequently obtained much more extensive government guidance to patients.

The information makes reference to possible "mild to moderate short-lasting pain at the injection site," and "an immediate stinging sensation." And that "other reactions commonly reported are headache, myalgia, fatigue and low grade fever."

Deborah suffered all of those symptoms and was off school for more than 10 weeks, unable to even play the piano due to her gradual immobility and chronic fatigue.

Mrs Halliday said Deborah had blood tests, saw paediatricians, rheumatoid arthritis specialists and other experts, but got no definitive answers about the cause of her condition other than a suggestion that it may have been arthralgia (joint pain).

A spokeswoman for Cervarix makers GlaxoSmithKline told the Nairnshire: "Any suspected adverse reaction relat-



Sherrel Halliday and her daughter Deborah

ed to vaccination can be very distressing and we take these reports very seriously.

"The UK medicines safety agency regularly reviews all reported suspected adverse events and has concluded that no new or serious risks have been identified during use of Cervarix in the UK, and that the balance of benefits and risks remains positive."

Cervarix is said to protect against two strains of HPV that cause more than 70% of cases of cervical cancer.

In the UK, about 3,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year and about 1,000 die from it.

UK medicine safety is the responsibility of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Its latest thinking on Cervarix is that "following the administration of at least four-million doses across the UK since September 2008, the balance of risks and benefits remains positive."

Each day, eight women in the UK are diagnosed and three women die of cervical cancer.

It is caused by certain types of a virus called the Human Papillomavirus or HPV.

HPV types 16 and 18 cause almost three-quarters of cases of cervical cancer in the UK.

Last year, more than 230,000 women in the UK required treatment or follow-up for an abnormal smear. Almost 40,000 women underwent treatment for a high-grade lesion.

The disease can be curable when diagnosed in its early stages and treated promptly. However, treatment

for cervical cancer can be invasive and can affect fertility.

A healthy lifestyle, cervical screening and HPV vaccination are the best ways to reduce a woman's risk of cervical cancer.

The HPV vaccine was introduced into the UK immunisation programme in September 2008, with routine vaccination of girls aged 12 to 13 and a time-limited catch-up of 13 to 17-year-old girls.

Cervarix manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline says the vaccination has been shown to reduce the number of abnormal smears and associated invasive treatment.