

Jab turned my girl into woman of 90

Mum hits out over failure to make clear potential risks of vaccine

BY HELEN BUSHNELL

THE risk of cervical cancer was brought into sharp focus when reality TV star Jade Goody died after a high profile battle against the disease, aged just 27.

In the aftermath of the mum-of-two passing away in March

2009, worried women went to their doctors in droves to have smear tests to screen for early signs of the cancer.

The Jade Goody effect, as it was called, led to a 20 per cent increase in the number of Scots women being tested.

But new statistics show the number undergoing the life-

saving test has fallen in the past 10 years from of a peak of 81.7 per cent to 73 per cent in 2011/12. Yet according to Dr Ken Oates, NHS Highland's consultant in public health medicine, the region is bucking the trend, with the number of smear tests being carried out remaining static.

He said: "We have an 80 per

cent uptake in cervical screening and that has remained stable in the last few years.

"It's an opportunity to try to detect cancer early and prevent it becoming a serious illness."

Another way women are protecting themselves from cervical cancer, which kills around 1,000 each year in the UK, is having a vaccine against the human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes the disease.

The immunisation programme to protect school-girls against the two high risk types - HPV-16 and HPV-18 - that cause more than 70 per cent of cervical cancer cases, started in Scotland in September 2008.

An NHS Highland spokeswoman described the uptake as "very positive", with more than eight out of 10 girls in S2 receiving three doses of the vaccine.

She added: "All eligible girls in Highland have access to the vaccine through their school nurse and the treatment is delivered in S2 in all secondary schools across the country.

"Immunising girls before they become infected with HPV could prevent up to 400 deaths from cervical cancer per year in Britain.

"Since its introduction in September 2008, around five million doses of the vaccine have been administered to

girls across the UK, and the evidence shows it is safe." However, as the Scottish Government introduces a new HPV Gardasil vaccine, one local mum who would disagree strongly that the jab is safe is Sherell Halliday (50), who believes her daughter Deborah (now 15), suffered severely from joint pain - a known side effect of Cervarix, the former HPV vaccine.

She has hit out at a Scottish Government leaflet about the new jab as she believes it does not accurately spell out to parents the potential risks involved. In turn, she urges parents to ensure they fully research the effects.

Sherell, of Meikle Geddes near Cawdor, claims that in the months after Deborah was immunised in September 2010, she suffered joint pain and deteriorated to the extent that she couldn't walk, was bed-ridden and couldn't feed or dress herself.



Sherell recalled: "They were desperate times. It was like she was a woman of 90 not a teenage girl."

In the days after having her first dose, Deborah, now a fourth year pupil at Nairn Academy, experienced headaches and pain in her hands.

By Christmas that year, after having the second dose in November, she found it difficult to walk and was getting stiffer. By the end of January 2011 she could barely walk and was diagnosed with a joint pain condition called arthralgia. Her doctor also described her as being "unnaturally stiff for her age".

The doctor also asked Sherell what had changed in her daughter's life, and the only thing she could think of was the HPV vaccine.

Sent home with pain killers, Deborah's symptoms worsened to the extent that she attended Raigmore Hospital's accident and emergency unit with unexplained chest spasms.

By this time she was undergoing physiotherapy and hydrotherapy the Nairn swimming pool, but on April 5 last year she collapsed at school and ended up back at Raigmore with a burst appendix. After undergoing an

Eating silica-rich foods and drinking mineral water dramatically improved Deborah's health.

operation and overcoming infection she was off school for 10 weeks and had a walking stick for a while.

Deborah recalled: "At one point we wondered if would I need a wheelchair soon. I also needed sunglasses as I was sensitive to light. My vision was blurred and I had headaches."

Her mum said that Deborah was sleeping for up to 14 hours a day.

At this time a rheumatologist at Raigmore said Deborah did not have arthralgia, adding he did not know the cause of her symptoms, and did not therefore have a cure.

Sherell said: "When I challenged him about whether it was the vaccine that had caused it, he would't comment."

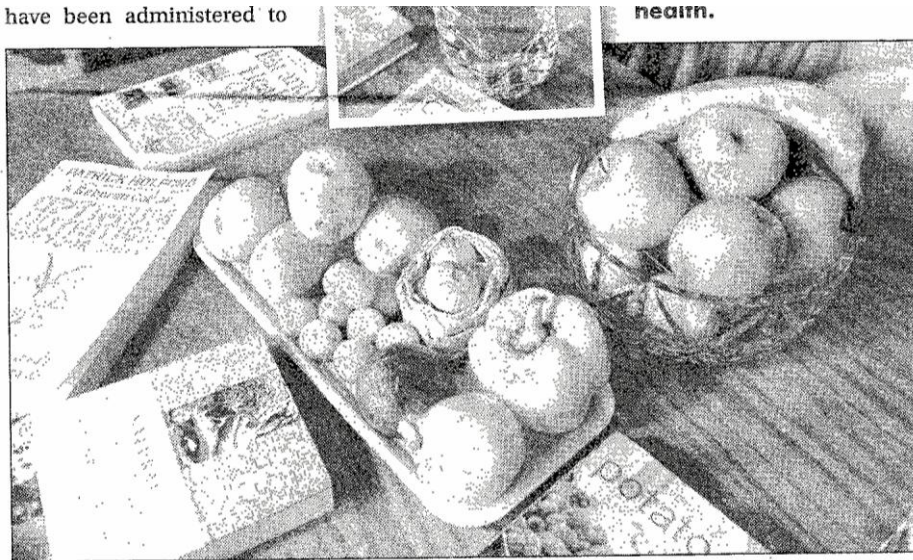
"Deborah was in bed and could not do anything. At her sickest point I was feeding her by hand as she could not feed herself or dress herself. She would scream out in the night as she was in pain. It was horrendous."

Worried mum Sherell began researching the HPV vaccine and was shocked to find parents in other countries, including America, reporting their children had suffered ill affects after having the jab, which contains aluminium.

She also discovered how silica-rich mineral waters such as Volvic, and everyday foods such as chicken and fish can

have been administered to

neairn.



as volvic, and everyday foods such as chicken and fish can help counter the effects of aluminium poisoning.

And to the family's amazement they found that by introducing Volvic and silica-rich foods into Deborah's diet, her mobility was improved.

She also continued with physiotherapy and hydrotherapy and today, her health is much better, although she is still not the active, sporty teenager she once was.

Although her daughter is on the mend, Sherell, who also has another daughter Katherine (13), is still tirelessly campaigning online and by writing to politicians about the HPV vaccine issue.

I'm angry at how this has been handled

CAMPAIGNER Sherell Halliday is angry at how NHS Highland is handling the introduction of the new HPV vaccine.

She is concerned about a new leaflet being distributed to pupils as she feels it is not transparent in detailing the side effects of the new Gardasil jab.

And she believes parents are not being given enough time to research the treatment before their daughters are immunised.

She also hit out at a letter being handed out to S2 pupils ahead of the injections taking place, for not explaining how the vaccine had changed from Cervarax to Gardasil.

She said: "It is not correct to state that this vaccine has been used within Scotland for the last four years.

"Gardasil is different vaccine and with a totally different make-up from Cervarix.

"I am also angry that the guidebook supplied has been somewhat simplified. It does not contain the full, detailed list of side-effects.

"Why do you have to follow an online link upon link to find out the more

serious reactions, such as Guillain Barre Syndrome, muscle weakness, joint pain and general unwellness, to name but a few, but which are very debilitating. Parents are being misled."

Sherell's younger daughter Katherine (13) was given the letter on a Wednesday night this month, with school nurses turning up at Nairn Academy the following Monday to start vaccinating.

She believes parents should have had at least seven days to consider the implications.

She added: "I am so angry about the way this has been handled. Parents have not had enough opportunity to research this and ask questions."

She has written to NHS Highland's immunisation co-ordinator Abhayadevi Tissington and chief executive Elaine Mead, copying it to the school's head teacher Julie MacDonald, Nairn Provost Liz MacDonald and MSP Fergus Ewing.

But NHS Highland defended its stance. A spokeswoman admitted consent forms were usually issued further in advance.

She added: "It is unfortunate that

this was not the case in this instance. We don't detail the brand used, it is the HPV vaccine and that is what it is known as."

She said most adverse events to the vaccine "are minor reactions already listed in the product information".

She added: "A wide range of information material is used to support the vaccination campaign and all girls eligible have access to advice from health professionals."

Dr Ken Oates, NHS Highland's consultant in public health medicine, said the HPV vaccine booklet had been produced nationally.

He said: "It's had the input of numerous experts and advisers and this is what has been agreed as an appropriate leaflet.

"The vaccine has a very good safety record. Hundreds of thousands of girls have received it in the UK in the last three or four years.

"This is an opportunity to have girls protected against cervical cancer and I wholeheartedly recommend everyone takes it up."