

# Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

## Committee Inquiry into Stroke services in Wales – Written evidence from Dave Pitman

Dear Stephen

My name is Dave Pitman and after my Wife received a copy of "CALL FOR EVIDENCE" it prompted to relate to you what happened to my Wife and myself when she suffered a stroke 17/2/08.

What you are about to read, I assure you is 100% accurate, and if after reading this mail you should wish to contact me with any questions – I would be only too happy to help as I strongly believe this subject should have been addressed years ago.

You will probably find this hard to believe in this day and age, and I still cannot believe it happened myself.

It all started when my wife Tina (48 non smoker, and teatotal) complained to me of toothache on the Friday 15/2/2008, Due to there only being an emergency dentist in Glynneath who could not fit her in due to a heavy work load, she would have to attend the emergency practice in Swansea.

Saturday 16/2/2008 in the afternoon we attended the practice in the uplands, Tina had an x-ray taken and was told a piece of root which had been left in the gum from a child had suddenly gone septic and that she would have to attend hospital to have it removed.

She then had to wait four days Wednesday 20/2/2008 (in extreme pain) before her own dental surgeon could see her and claimed that he could give her the surgery that she required, having been in excruciating pain for the last five days she readily agreed, and had to have a healthy tooth removed, the gum cut down to reach the septic root, after this she went home had a bath laid on the settee to read.

At 5.20 Tina phoned me sounding in great distress, her voice was very shallow and I could just make out GET HOME QUICK, I rushed home (about 300 hundred yards) to find her losing consciousness and vomiting blood. I rang the Doctor and explained that my Wife who by this time had gone into spasms with erratic breathing as well as being totally incoherent by now. The Doctor told me "THIS IS A DENTAL PROBLEM NOT A MEDICAL ONE" I then had to leave my Wife in the state she was in to drive the 300 yds to the Dental practice, he explained he had only given her Novocain and wrote me a letter for the Doctor. I rushed home to find Tina totally unconscious and breathing very shallow, the phone rang and it was Tina's friend who lives a few doors away I asked her to come as quick as possible, she was there within seconds, I rang the Doctor again and explained the seriousness of the situation She told me she would call after surgery in about half an hour, after forty minutes Tina's vital signs started to drop and at this point I phoned 999, two paramedics arrived at the same time as the Doctor. Tina was taken to the Glynneath ambulance station where they changed shifts (all this took time) and eventually she was taken to Morriston hospital now semi conscious where she was given antibiotics something to stop the vomiting and paracetamol for the headache she complained of all via an intravenous drip, she was then taken to a ward where she remained semi conscious for two days and slept for most of the third, when I managed to talk with her it quickly became apparent to me that she had suffered some sort of brain damage as she did not know how old she was, could not understand simple numbers, how many dogs we owned, the colour of the living room carpet and so on, she was totally incoherent, she had numbness in one leg, tunnel vision, no coordination, and very bad headaches continually, she had lost a lot of her memory.

Until this point I had been told nothing, when I spoke to the MAX FAX consultant he told me this was a slight reaction to the Novocaine.

On Friday 22/2/2008 I spoke to the ward Doctor who informed me 'Tina is going home tomorrow' I then explained That she was in no fit state to leave, the Doctor then left and on her return informed me Tina would be staying after all for further observations, that same evening I was asked to leave by the ward sister (as I had stayed over night) due to the fact Tina was very scared as she told me no one believed her and thought she was putting all this on. Eventually that same evening I managed to speak to one of the main consultants, he read through her notes and assured me he would examine her himself and would phone me in the morning.

Saturday 23/3/2008 the phone rang about 9 o'clock and the consultant asked to attend the hospital immediately, he explained that he had examined her the previous evening and had found her incoherent, difficulty walking, loss of memory and so on, he told me that a colleague had also examined her and claimed that she new her age, who she was and was walking very well, he also told me that they had ruled out a STROKE as a neurologist had examined her and that all the nerve ends in the brain were all working normal, when I enquired about the possibility of a scan he told me "we do not scan someone who could possibly have brain damage" (LATER WHEN I SPOKE TO A SECOND DOCTOR HE SAID THAT IS THE VERY TIME YOU DO PERFORM A SCAN). He also told me that there was Bacteraemia found in the blood something to do with white blood cells, and that a normal healthy person had a count of 11 Tina's was 18, he also told me that the antibiotics had cleared this and there no more they could do and that she was being sent home that afternoon.

Sunday - Monday - Tuesday and Wednesday she slept almost continually still taking strong pain killers for the bad headaches.

Thursday 28/2/2008 my oldest son Dean 28 saw the state His Mother was in and took her back to the Doctor realising how incoherent she was he sent her to Tonna Hospital which is for mainly ALZHIPMER Suffers, after several hours they transferred her to Neath/Port Talbot Hospital where she spent the night in ward F for people with MENTAL DIFFICULTIES (this was very frightening for her as she was locked in), eventually she was transferred to a ward where someone AT LONG LAST HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO GIVE HER A SCAN, and

it showed a bleed on the brain (LEFT PARIETO HAEMATOMA) this is when we knew for certain that Tina had had a STROKE.

For weeks after we had no help at all, we did not know who to talk to the Doctor suggested social services, who were not that helpful, I cleaned, cooked and tried to keep my job going. Eventually we did get help.

Since all this happened some 18 months ago Tina has made a superb progress although she still suffers the problem with her sight, gets very tired tends to be a little slow, and the Doctors have stopped her working and driving, so as you can imagine this whole nightmare has been life changing and as I said right at the beginning this subject needs looking into desperately as dose the recognition of STROKES.

Yours

Dave Pitman