Angry grandad drags top docs before GMC

Bill slams Government experts over MMR jabs

By Janet Boyle

A SCOTS grandad has reported 11 of the country's leading doctors to the General Medical Council because he claims they failed children over the MMR vaccine.

Bill Welsh, whose grandson Luke Payton (13) is autistic, is claiming England's Chief Medical Officer Liam Donaldson, his predecessor, Scots Professor Kenneth Calman, and others were negligent in the procedures introducing and running the programme.

Sir Liam is principal adviser to the UK Government on health matters.

Damaged

Bill also claimed they failed to address the medical needs of children he believes were damaged by the triple vaccine.

"Not all the safety checks were made in running this vaccine," he said, "and when children developed autism and the bowel problems that accompany it they were neglected and denied proper treatment.

"Many were just dismissed as having a syndrome and that's unforgivable apathy."

Mr Welsh, from Glasgow, heads the Autism Treatment Trust charity, which offers help to families with autistic children.

"More than 300 Scots parents have come forward for help and we employ a doctor and scientist to treat the medical effects of autism.

"Some of these parents have had to fight for decent medical care for their children. Some tell us the bowel problems are dismissed as autism so they flounder about, desperate for treatment.

"We hold our medical leaders to account for this."

Bill believes a rise in autism in children from one in 2500 in the 1980s to one in 88 today may be directly linked to the vaccination.

"Autism may be better diagnosed but that alone can't account for the huge increase," he said.

"Isn't it time the Government carried out some research into why so many children now suffer from autism? Both candidates in the US election have promised to do this."

The controversy was sparked by a 1998 report by Dr Andrew Wakefield and some of his colleagues in medical journal *The Lancet* in which he linked 12 children suffering from the developmental disorder to MMR injections.

Some Scots children who were inoculated with separate vaccines also went on to develop autism but Bill Welsh suggested, "It's the components of the individual vaccines, not just the triple formula.

"We believe there is a sub-group of children susceptible to developing autism from the vaccines. We're not saying all will."

Andrew Wakefield's report hit front pages and caused panic among parents. Many of those with autistic children felt he was the first doctor to take their problems seriously.

Flawed

Many boycotted the MMR vaccine and a rise in infectious childhood diseases followed. However, Dr Wakefield's fellow authors published a partial retraction of the article in 2004 and *The Lancet* described the research as "fatally flawed".

Dr Wakefield was reported to the GMC, accused of suppressing data and acting "dishonestly and irresponsibly" in failing to disclose how patients were recruited for the study. His case is ongoing and resumes on November 3.

Life for the Welsh family also continues, as they work to provide care for Luke.

"We first noticed a difference in him shortly after he was vaccinated as an infant," Bill said. "He became withdrawn and the little cheerful boy we once knew disappeared.

"It was as though he had totally switched off to us and was concentrating on his own world.

"Bowel problems followed and he seemed to be miserable at times. Today, at 13, he is still unable to speak and attends a school for children with special educational needs.

"He loves music and we get out to do a bit of cycling and try to help achieve his potential, but we firmly believe we lost much of Luke the day he was vaccinated. Sadly, like many families of autistic children, we fear for his future.

"We're all shocked and angered that so little effort has gone into researching why there has been this huge increase in autism.

Risk

"So many parents report huge changes in their infants after vaccination. Should we not be identifying children at risk from autism from vaccination?"

A spokesman for the GMC said, "We cannot comment on either Mr Welsh's complaint or the ongoing case of Dr Wakefield."

The Scottish Government issued a statement saying, "The combined MMR vaccine has been used for nearly 30 years, with more than 500 million doses given in over 100 countries.

"Current evidence shows no proven scientific link between autism and the combined MMR vaccine."

Dr Wakefield has relaunched his career in America where he's opened a new clinic in Texas funded by the parents of autistic children.

Supporters include actor Jim Carrey and girl country band The Dixie Chicks.

■ Bill and grandson Luke, who at the age of 13 still can't speak.

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