

# Girl, three, dies after being given wrong gas

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THE family of a three-year-old girl who died in hospital after being given "laughing gas" instead of oxygen yesterday demanded action to end the spate of NHS accidents.

Najiyah Hussain fell ill shortly after having a flu injection and was taken to hospital suffering from fits. But when she arrived at Newham General Hospital's Accident and Emergency department she was given nitrous oxide gas instead of oxygen. A doctor placed a mask over her head to administer oxygen to aid her breathing.

But he pulled the wrong lever on the side of the trolley and pure nitrous oxide flooded her lungs. The anaesthetic, usually administered in small doses, reduced her heart rate within seconds and she suffered a heart attack. She was immediately rushed to intensive care and placed on a life support machine.

But at 7pm on Jan 18 it was agreed that nothing more could be done for her and the machine was turned off. Najiyah, from Manor Park, east London, had suffered a seizure before but this is not thought to be connected with the flu injection. Yesterday her family demanded an investigation into her death and called for a review of NHS procedures.

Her father Akmul Hussain, 41, a self-employed leather goods importer from Bangladesh, said: "When I was told it was a mistake I was so full of grief. The whole family was devastated. In my heart I do feel anger but I realise that I cannot bring Najiyah back. We want to tell people about what happened for the others. This should not happen again."

Najiyah's sister, Aysha, 21, an accountancy student, said: "I just don't understand how someone can make such a mistake. The NHS does not have a good record at the moment. They should do something to stop these mistakes. Najiyah was so funny, so cute. She had just started nursery. The whole

family was so proud of her because she was such a character."

In a statement Newham Healthcare NHS Trust, offered condolences to her parents. It said: "The trust has launched an internal investigation." This is the fourth time in the past six weeks that the wrong drug or treatment has been administered in an English NHS hospital.

Three of the cases ended in death. Brighton Health Care Trust launched an investigation yesterday after a three-year-old boy with suspected meningitis was given four times the prescribed dose of an anti-viral drug. The child was not harmed, the hospital said. Last weekend a consultant at the Royal Sussex County Hospital was suspended after the death of a patient, who had a drug injected into a vein instead of the spine. An investigation is under way.

In January, at the Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, Wayne Jowett, 18, a leukaemia patient, died after a drug was injected into his spine instead of a vein. At the same time, an inquest in Northampton recorded a verdict of accidental death on a woman who was wrongly injected with the same drug.

Katherine Murphy, of the Patients' Association, said yesterday: "We cannot understand how this latest accident happened. The gases are in different coloured tubes." Prof Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer, said procedures were being improved.

He said: "Safer care for patients will be achieved by focusing on designing better systems."

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