

Flu jab death: inquest call

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The husband of a Dundee woman who suffered a rare fatal reaction to a flu jab was meeting legal chiefs today to call for an inquiry into her death, writes Steven Bell.

Grandmother Sylvia Thomson (56) died in hospital late last year, and subsequent tests have concluded the cause was a routine vaccination at her GP's practice.

Her husband Robert was due to meet officials from the Procurator Fiscal's office in the city this afternoon to ask that a Fatal Accident Inquiry be held.

"I would not want what happened to my wife to happen to anybody else," said Robert today. "I feel that I need an inquiry to ascertain if the drug has been properly tested.

"From what I have been told, a lot of these drugs are manufactured in China and India then brought into Britain through middle-men.

"I will be asking for an FAI, although whether I get it or not we'll have to see. The letter I got from the fiscal's office seems to be quite sympathetic."

Officials have admitted that, although Mrs Thomson's reaction to the injection was rare, it could happen to other people.

Depute fiscal Arthur Wheelan said in a letter, "The cause of death is extremely unusual, but it is clear that other persons will be predisposed to this type of reaction from the flu jab.

"One consideration is how the conclusion regarding this type of death is put to best use with a view to saving lives in future."

Former PE teacher Sylvia only went to her GP for a flu vaccination in November "as a precaution", as she was suffering with an intermittent chest infection.

Around a week later she was taken into hospital suffering from encephalitis, swelling in her brain. Her condition deteriorated and she died on December 2.

"As soon as I took her up to the hospital they took her to the infectious diseases ward and started treating her for suspected encephalitis," recalled oil worker Robert, who was married to Sylvia for 30 years.

Initially doctors were unsure of the cause of Sylvia's illness, but after she died Mr Thomson insisted the post mortem focus on the flu vaccination.

The Scottish Executive and Health Protection Scotland, which oversees the flu jab programme, have described adverse reactions to the seasonal vaccine as rare.