

# FLU JAB KILLS RITA, 66

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## Doctor tells her family it caused lethal brain bug

A SCOTS pensioner has died after being given a flu jab. <http://www.record-mail.co.uk/shtml/NEWS/P1S3.shtml>

Just two days after the injection, Rita Gillooly, 66, was struck down by the same bug which hospitalised Celtic star Morten Wieghorst.

Doctors have told Rita's family there is "no doubt" that the jab brought on Guillain Barre Syndrome - a condition affecting the nervous system which paralyses sufferers.

Last night, her son John said: "I wouldn't want anyone to die the way my mother did. She couldn't even talk at the end. People aren't aware that the injection can cause death."

Rita, of Milton, Glasgow, was struck down with the condition 48 hours after getting the injection at her local GP's surgery on November 7.

Although most people, including Danish midfielder Wieghorst, make a full recovery, Rita's heart was already weakened by a triple-bypass operation she underwent last year.

She first complained of numbness in her legs and her husband John, 67, took her to Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow before she was transferred to the neurological unit of the city's Southern General Hospital where eventually died.

Her son and three daughters could only watch helplessly at her bedside as the paralysis crept up her body.

But last night one of Britain's leading Guillain Barre experts urged the public not to panic.

Dr Hugh Willison, of the Southern General, said: "In Scotland, between 50 and 100 people will develop the condition every year. Of that number only one or two per cent of cases will have been connected to the flu vaccination."

Rita's son John said: "I know it's selfish but if my mum had to die, I'd rather she'd have gone really quickly.

"We had to watch her deteriorate every single day.

"She seemed okay after the injection but a couple of days later she said she couldn't feel her legs and collapsed.

"We took her to Stobhill first but the doctors were baffled and transferred her to the Southern General.

"She started getting much worse but the doctors said it was a viral infection and they had to let it run its course.

"Then her blood pressure dropped dramatically last Tuesday and they gave her adrenaline.

"We were warned that if the pressure dropped again they couldn't give her any more adrenaline because it would bring on a heart attack.

"Mum was taken to intensive care the same night. Morten Wieghorst was in the next ward and was passing by to have tests when she was wheeled down.

"He said not to worry and he would see her when she got back to the ward.

"But two days later, we were told mum had just 24 hours to live. Her kidneys and liver had failed.

"She'd lost her voice totally with the paralysis and she took a chest infection.

"We were all with her when she died and we couldn't understand it.

"Mum was a fit woman who walked the Giant's Causeway only a few months after her heart operation.

"I suppose if the condition can leave a young, fit footballer on the brink of death there was no chance for my mother."

Doctors have told the family Rita's illness was triggered by the flu jab.

But Dr Willison said: "One of the biggest outbreaks of GBS in the 1970s was thought to be following influenza vaccinations.

"I would advise people to see their doctor if they are worried about the affects of the injection but I would have no qualms about having it myself. The risks are minimal.

"The flu can be devastating. It kills a large number of people every year and many people have to take weeks off work."

Gordon Peebles, spokesman for the Guillain Barre Syndrome support group, counsels families whose loved ones fall victim to the condition.

He said: "I saw three women last January who fell ill with GBS following the flu vaccination. The condition always follows infection and vaccinations work in a similar way in that people are being injected with bacteria. It is very unusual that someone actually dies from GBS.

"People usually make a recovery and are able to get on with their lives again."

John said: "I would never advise anyone not to get the flu injection but I will never have it myself.

"I had no idea when my mother went to the doctors for a simple jab she would end up dead two weeks later."

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