

Our beautiful, healthy little girl had an MMR injection. Within hours, she was dying

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THE parents of a baby girl who lay dying within hours of being vaccinated for MMR have spoken of their terrible legacy of anger and guilt. Fourteen-month-old Emma Jane Gentle developed a fever and stopped breathing six hours after the inoculation. Three days later her parents Paul and Nicola took the heart-rending decision to switch off her life-support machine.

Medical experts claimed at an inquest last week that there was 'no evidence' of a link with MMR.

But their evidence, which led to an open verdict, outraged Mr and Mrs Gentle, who are demanding that the triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella be banned.

'We know the MMR vaccine is to blame - why else would a beautiful, healthy little girl die just like that?' asked 26-year-old Mrs Gentle, who has a three-year-old son called Alex. 'Before that day, she was so strong with such a zest for life. 'No parent should ever have to attend their own child's funeral but when the death is caused by something that is supposed to keep them well, it's the worst thing you could ever imagine.

'I have to live with the guilt that I took my baby to the surgery and allowed her to be given an injection which killed her. There is not a moment of the day that I don't think about that.

'No family should ever have to go through what we have. We were the perfect family, a boy and a girl and loving parents-all that has been taken away from us. If we didn't have Alex, we wouldn't have anything to live for.'

Mrs Gentle, from Plymouth, recalled the afternoon in September last year when Emma was given her vaccine at their GP's surgery.

'It was 4.30pm and after-wards she became grizzly,' she said. 'By 6pm she started running a fever so I gave her some Calpol and put her to bed. She was restless so I switched on the baby monitor and came downstairs.

'She then went off to sleep and I was reassured to hear her breathing quite heavily. But suddenly just before 10pm I heard her make a funny gurgling noise and then the monitor went silent. I raced upstairs to find her lying completely still with her eyes wide and not breathing. I cradled her limp body in my arms and ran downstairs. As I lay her on the sofa to resuscitate her I knew she was dead. That image will haunt me for the rest of my life.'

Doctors at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth managed to restart Emma's heart but she was found to be brain dead.

Coroner Nigel Meadows said he was unable to establish cause of death because efforts made at the hospital to resuscitate Emma appeared to have destroyed vital evidence.

Dr Elizabeth Miller, a neurologist at the Department of Communicable Diseases, Public Health laboratory, told the hearing the death was 'coincidental and not causally related' to the vaccination. She claimed the fever would not have developed until five or six days later if it had been linked to MMR.

Some parents claim the vaccine has caused autism and bowel disease but the Department of Health strongly supports the triple jab, which has been given to four million British children.

Mr Gentle, 30 a civil servant, said parents should be given the choice of having the three components as single jabs.

A Health Department spokesman said. 'Since there is no evidence linking this death to MMR vaccine, it would be most unfortunate if parents were given unnecessary cause for alarm'



Paul and Nicola Gentle: Faced the terrible decision to let the life-support machine be switched off

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