

Snore Centre Patient eNewsletter

August 2011

Petition Launched to Prevent Sleep Apnoea Road Deaths



Carole Upcraft has launched an e-petition calling for the government to pressure lorry drivers to have tests for sleep apnoea, which causes daytime sleepiness and fatigue.

Her son Daniel, 32, suffered brain damage and his fiancée Nicola Culshaw, 33, was killed when their car was hit by a lorry while queuing for the Dartford tunnel on the M25 in April last year. The lorry driver, 40-year-old David Thomas from Upminster, was initially charged with causing death by dangerous driving, but the case was dropped when it was discovered he had undiagnosed sleep apnoea.

Library supervisor Mrs Upcraft, of Knoll Rise, Orpington, said: "There is no point in being vengeful here.

We just need to find a positive out of what happened. We do not want another family to go through what we have gone through. Research shows that 41 per cent of HGV drivers have a sleep disorder of one kind or another, but most of them won't be aware of it."

The father of Toby Tweddell, who was killed in a road accident in 2006, has also spoken out on radio 5 live calling for all lorry

drivers to be screened for sleep apnoea. The driver responsible for the accident also joined the call for action.

This tragic case demonstrates the fatal consequences of the lack of awareness of the condition, both within the medical profession, and by drivers themselves. It also shows that commercial drivers have nothing to fear from a positive diagnosis as the driver in this case was absolved of responsibility for the accident having been misdiagnosed. He is still driving today having been treated successfully.

The coroner of the case, and Toby's parents both called for screening at the time of the killing, and five years later nothing has been done and road deaths due to

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THE PETITION

Tired drivers cause violent deaths & horrific injuries

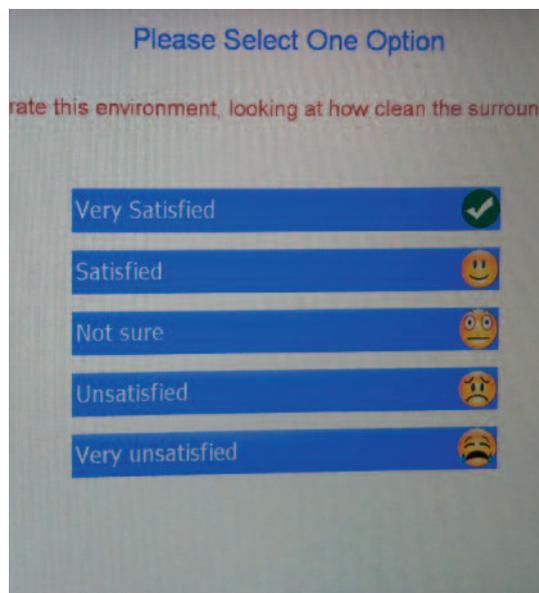
Responsible department:
Department for Transport

I would like a debate to raise awareness for the early diagnosis of HGV drivers with sleep apnoea. Last year my son and his fiancée were crashed into by a driver who had undiagnosed sleep apnoea. My son was left with serious brain injuries and his fiancée was killed. The driver was charged with death by dangerous driving but days before the trial the case was dropped by the CPS as he was driving unaware of this medical condition. There are clear criteria and indicators as to who is likely to suffer this condition. Please help raise awareness with haulage employers and GP's. So that no other person is killed by a condition that is treatable.

To sign the petition, which needs 100,000 signatures to be considered by the government, go to petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/5851

sleep apnoea have continued. However, with the Corporate Manslaughter Act now in full force a similar case could now result in the driver's employers being sued for negligence. Hopefully companies will now take action before this happens again.

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Patient Satisfaction Directly Linked to Care Quality

Asking your friends and neighbors to recommend a good hospital is the best way to find high-quality care, according to a study from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business.

The researchers compared patient satisfaction surveys and clinical performance measures, such as administering standardized tests, from two large federal databases. Focusing on three common ailments, heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia, the team measured 30-day readmission rates at roughly 2,500 hospitals. The readmission rate reflects the number of patients who are hospitalized again within 30 days of discharge.

The patient satisfaction scores were more closely linked with high-quality hospital care than clinical performance measures, the authors found. "Patients can sense

if a hospital is doing things right," said co-author Richard Staelin, professor of business administration at Fuqua. "If you want to figure out if a hospital is providing high-quality care, asking patients if they were satisfied with their care is a better indicator than whether the staff competently performs a battery of tests."

I use the Jayex QI Interactive system in my clinic to do just that, and strongly believe that patient opinion should be used to guide the future of the NHS. Access to detailed patient feedback can enable consultants like myself to transform services to specifically meet the needs of the patient. By continually monitoring patient feedback all year round in real-time, doctors can analyse performance on an ongoing basis, and share best practice across the NHS.

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