



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**ALAN JOHNSON FACES POLITICAL & LEGAL PRESSURE FOR A PUBLIC INQUIRY OVER STAFFORD HOSPITAL**

MPs today debate the Stafford hospital scandal in an adjournment debate amid growing demands for an independent inquiry. Over 140 MPs have already signed an early day motion calling for a public inquiry. It has also emerged that Secretary of State, Alan Johnson, faces a legal challenge from relatives of patients who died at Stafford over his refusal, thus far, to provide a public inquiry. A leading law firm, Leigh Day have been instructed to apply for a judicial review of his decision on the basis that it breaches Human Rights law. Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) – the charity for patient safety and justice, has joined forces with ‘Cure the NHS’ (the self help campaign group of patients and families affected by failings at Stafford Hospital) in leading the campaign for a full public inquiry into how the events at Stafford were allowed to happen, and can prevented happening in an NHS hospital ever again. They have written to all MPs urging them to sign the EDM. AvMA is also working in partnership with Cure the NHS to arrange for its specialist medico-legal advice to be made easily accessible to families affected by events at Stafford, and on the broader campaign to ensure lessons are learnt and improvements made. Although Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, has so far ruled out a public inquiry, he told members of Cure the NHS at a meeting with them on 26<sup>th</sup> March that he would reconsider.

Members of the public can sign up to the campaign for a public inquiry by signing the online petition hosted by the Patients Association:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=pU\\_2blxaSR6UWehfEZ\\_2fhYLSQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=pU_2blxaSR6UWehfEZ_2fhYLSQ_3d_3d)

or by e-mailing [advice@avma.org.uk](mailto:advice@avma.org.uk).

According to AvMA and Cure the NHS, the Healthcare Commission report with Stafford and other inquiries promised by Mr Johnson do not cover some of the most important questions which remain to be answered. These include

- Why did the Healthcare Commission fail to become aware of the problems at Stafford and intervene for so long?
- Why were the Primary Care Trust and the Strategic Health Authority not aware of or fail to address the problems at Stafford?

- How did Monitor fail to recognise the problems at Stafford and allow it to be afforded 'Foundation Trust' status? How is it that the different bodies failed to communicate?
- Why were the concerns and complaints of patients and relatives over a long period of time not properly addressed or not spark urgent action from any of the relevant bodies?
- What reasons are there to believe that existing and emerging systems of monitoring and regulating quality and safety, including the new Care Quality Commission, would prevent the same things happening again?
- What measures have been taken to address the failings of individual board members; managers and other staff responsible?
- Are the measures taken to identify which patients may have been harmed or died unnecessarily due to failings at Stafford adequate?
- What lessons can be learnt at every level to prevent something like this happening again?

Only a comprehensive, independent and transparent inquiry is likely to enjoy public confidence.

AvMA's free and confidential specialist medico-legal Helpline is being promoted to anyone with concerns that they or a loved one may have been harmed as a result of sub standard care at Stafford, so that they can receive appropriate advice and support. The Helpline Number is **0845 123 23 52** (Mon – Fri 10 – 5. All calls are charged at the local rate). AvMA is also arranging advice surgeries in Stafford in collaboration with Cure the NHS, so that patients / families can get face to face advice from AvMA's specialist medico-legal advisers, and arranging a public meeting to discuss what happens next and the campaign for a Public Inquiry.

AvMA has written to Secretary of State Alan Johnson asking for involvement in planning the independent reviews of patients medical records which have been promised, as well as making the case for a public inquiry.

ENDS