

Brain surgeon condemns NHS head injury decision as incomprehensible

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Published on **Sunday 2 December 2012 00:00**

A LEADING Scottish brain surgeon has branded a decision not to recognise a common head injury in new NHS guidance as "so daft it is beyond comprehension."

Consultant [neurosurgeon](#) Patrick Statham said he is "stunned" that doctors at NHS Scotland are refusing to add the illness post-traumatic hypopituitarism (PTHP) to new clinical guidelines despite studies showing up to a third of people who suffer a head injury will have the condition.

The Edinburgh-based expert believes every patient who is seen by a doctor after suffering a head injury should be assessed for PTHP to make sure they get proper treatment for the condition, which causes major depression, chronic fatigue and infertility.

Last month, Scotland on Sunday told how a mother whose son, Chris, committed suicide several years after he developed the condition started a campaign to get PTHP officially recognised by health officials. Joanna Lane wrote to the Scottish Government asking for PTHP to be included in the revised NHS guidelines to be published early next year by Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), which produces clinical practice guidelines for Scotland. Ministers have now written to her saying the new guidance will not be updated to include PTHP. In a letter, the Scottish Government said: "SIGN agrees post-traumatic hypopituitarism is a condition that would benefit from greater public and clinical recognition.

"However, a clinical guideline is not about raising the profile of particular conditions but about presenting the clinical community with the best evidence to diagnose and treat. [Brain injury](#) is an extremely wide-reaching topic and as such it would never be possible to encompass all possible areas of investigation."

Lane's son fractured his skull when he fell out of a tree when he was seven. He later developed depression and discovered he was impotent. Both are attributed to PTHP.

His mother, a former teacher, said: "This small change would have cost SIGN nothing, but yet this has been refused. This just nakedly shows that the Scottish Government does not want to help people with PTHP to get [diagnosed](#) because there are a lot of them and they're expensive to treat.

"Having lost my son when he was aged just 31 to this, and to have had to watch the issues he had to deal with over the years, I am left utterly disgusted and stunned by this. The thought of more families going through what we have is heart-breaking. Early checks and intervention could change the life, save the lives even, of so many people."

Statham, who has backed Lane's drive, said he "did not understand" SIGN's decision. He said: "The guidelines have looked for public participation and they got it. They have looked for professional participation and they got it. This decision is so daft it is beyond comprehension.

"They say PTHP doesn't fit into the particular categories they have decided to be most important – but it fits into the rehabilitation of all patients with head injury, both physical cognitive and psychological."

A growing number of brain surgeons, politicians and celebrities – including former Labour spin doctor Alastair Campbell – are backing Lane's campaign to recognise the illness, which is caused by damage to the pituitary gland. It has never been officially recognised in the UK but is commonly diagnosed in a number of countries, including the US