

Two mothers who lost sons inspire sepsis investigation

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

SEPSIS deaths are to be examined in a study into why Britain ranks as one of the worst countries in Europe for child deaths from infection.

The research will explore concerns raised by Melissa Mead and Sue Morrish, who lost young sons to sepsis.

It would look at why delays in hospitalisations for these conditions – which often turn out to be fatal – occurred and hopefully identify ways to speed up admissions and ultimately save lives, the University of Northampton, which is leading the project, said.

The 18-month study will examine in detail incidents of serious infection in children under five – from the moment a parent realises their child is ill, through contact with front line health services, to their child's subsequent admission to hospital.

Mrs Mead's son William, one, died from sepsis due to a chest infection that could have been treated with antibiot-

ics. William, from Penryn, Cornwall, had been ill for six to eight weeks before he died and had been seen by GPs six times before his death in 2014.

Doctors failed to diagnose a chest infection and eventual pneumonia that led to the sepsis that killed him.

Sam Morrish, three, from Devon, died from severe sepsis in 2010 because of a catalogue of errors, including how his call was handled by NHS Direct, now replaced by the 111 service.

Call handlers failed to categorise his mother's call as urgent, despite indications that his vomit contained blood, and even when hospital staff realised he was critically ill, they waited three hours before administering the antibiotics that could have saved him.

Sarah Neill, associate professor of children's nursing, from the University of Northampton, said: "Identifying all the steps before admission that could be improved is vital if we are to spare other families the heartache Melissa and Sue have had to go through."

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