

Dear Sir,

Public Health England's recent report (**Deaths Associated with Neurological Conditions in England 2001 to 2014**) shows an alarming increase in numbers of deaths in people with neurological conditions. This 14-year progression demands action.

Epilepsy affects 600,000 people in the UK, along with their families and their communities. Deprivation is associated with poor seizure control, increased emergency admissions and sudden and early death. This report highlights that people in deprived areas with epilepsy are three times more likely to die than those from elsewhere.

Many of these untimely deaths can be avoided: 90% of those dying from Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP) in a population with high deprivation had demonstrated an increase in convulsive seizures and other risks in the previous three to six months. Only 20% of people with SUDEP had been in contact with specialist services. In half of recent deaths in pregnant women with epilepsy, medication to treat epilepsy was not being taken.

The 2014 removal of a financial incentive for GPs to annually monitor people with epilepsy has cost a valuable safety net, losing the ability to identify and manage those at highest risk. The search for solutions to this excess mortality has come from work driven or funded by bereaved families, working alongside committed NHS professionals, local coroners, university and clinical research teams, and charities.

The important lessons from such deaths cannot be buried in last week's snow drifts. This is another call for action from Government to protect society's most vulnerable. We hope that The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has time to meet a delegation led by the bereaved community.

Jane Hanna OBE, CEO SUDEP Action (linked charity Epilepsy Bereaved)

Dr John Hirst CBE, Chair SUDEP Action (linked charity Epilepsy Bereaved)

Professor Mary M Reilly, President and on behalf of the Association of British Neurologists

Professor Phil E M Smith, Immediate Past President of the Association of British Neurologists

Dr John Paul Leach, President of the British Branch of the International League Against Epilepsy

Joe Korner, Chief Executive, Neurological Alliance

Dr Craig Newman, Consultant Neuropsychologist, NHS Innovation Accelerator Fellow, Plymouth University

Dr Paul Morrish, Consultant Neurologist, Great Western Hospital, Swindon

Professor Leone Ridsdale, Professor of Neurology and General Practice, **King's College, London**

Dr Arjune Sen, Consultant Neurologist and Associate Professor, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford

Dr Rohit Shankar MBE, Consultant in Adult Developmental Psychiatry, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust