

Meningitis charity urge you to lobby your MP

Steve Dayman MBE who founded a meningitis charity following the death of his baby son says that babies and children "are dying or suffering disabilities needlessly due to slow bureaucracy".

The UK has one of the world's highest Meningitis B rates and it kills more of the country's under-fives than any other infectious disease.

It is the UK's most common form of bacterial meningitis, with one in 10 dying and one in three survivors suffering life-long after-effects such as brain damage, epilepsy, deafness and blindness.

Fresh Meningitis Now figures show that 1,000 Meningitis B cases could have been prevented had new vaccine Bexsero been introduced after its licence in January 2013.

Of these, around 400 people died or suffered disabilities, which cost the NHS over a lifetime.

Shockingly, around 50 children under-five died.

In March, the Government said Bexsero, which recently won Innovative Product at the UK Prix Galien Awards, the pharmaceutical industry's Oscars, will be free to babies up to age one on the NHS.

But this follows price negotiations with developer Novartis.

Negotiations only began five months later, in August, and continue, upsetting concerned parents and Meningitis Now.

Dayman, who launched the UK's meningitis movement after losing his baby son Spencer to the disease in 1982, believes

“enough is enough”.

Steve, who won a Pride of Britain for his 32-year crusade, earlier this month, said: “Negotiations have gone on too long – cut the red tape now, so no more lives are needlessly lost.

“It’s ridiculous that negotiations are still going on two-thirds of a year after news the vaccine will be on the NHS.

“I want to bang both parties’ heads together.

“The award-winning vaccine is the most monumental leap forward in the meningitis fight – time lost in introducing it is lives lost and families devastated.”

The UK’s largest meningitis charity launched Beat it Now! to unite supporters to lobby the Department of Health (DoH) to introduce Bexsero quickly after its licence.

The campaign, which saw a 36,500-name petition delivered to Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, now focuses on speeding up negotiations.

Meningitis Now wants everyone to lobby their MPs to ask Mr Hunt why negotiations appear to have stalled and when Bexsero will be introduced.

Bexsero was first delayed when the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which advises Government, twice deferred a decision to introduce it due to lack of evidence of cost-effectiveness.

After fresh evidence including Meningitis Now information on the disease’s burden on family and survivors’ quality of life, in March the JCVI overturned their original “no”.

By law, the Government must accept the “yes”, so then announced Bexsero will be free to babies up age one on the NHS, following price negotiations.

To join Beat it Now! or for more information visit
www.MeningitisNow.org.