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manchester news

Holiday hell man wins five-year battle

A BUSINESSMAN who contracted legionnaires' disease on a holiday to the Caribbean hopes to win a six-figure sum in compensation after a five-year legal battle.

Peter Ashley, from Warrington, still suffers hallucinations and has to take a cocktail of drugs to counter the effects of the disease, which he contracted just days after his arrival at the luxury Hotel Fiesta Bavaro, in the Dominican Republic, in February 1997.



**LEGAL FIGHT:
Peter Ashley and
his wife Ann**

Formerly a company technical director - with an annual salary of £85,000 - Mr Ashley is now unable to work or drive as a result of the illness. And he requires daily care from wife, Ann.

Tour operators Thomsons have finally accepted responsibility - five and a half years after the Ashleys returned home from their £2,300 holiday.

Now Mr Ashley is to start the second stage of legal proceedings, which will establish the amount of damages the company should pay.

Mr Ashley, 66, from Appleton, said: "I find it difficult to express the way we have been treated by Thomsons - it's absolutely appalling.

Trauma

"My life has been hell. The last five and a half years have been traumatic, both in terms of the degradation in my health and the fact that I have had to suffer five years of procrastination, denials and delaying tactics."

According to Mr Ashley's solicitors, Irwin Mitchell, the most likely cause of Mr Ashley's condition was the shower in his hotel room - which hotel records revealed was cleaned only once every six months.

And evidence produced by Mr Ashley's solicitors found that, at the time of the holiday, Thomsons had not implemented a system of inspection of the hygiene standards or legionella control at the hotel.

Commenting on the outcome of the first stage of the legal action, Clive Garner, a partner with Irwin Mitchell, said: "I am delighted that Mr Ashley has won his case.

"It is well known that the risk of contracting this disease can be drastically reduced by adopting simple, inexpensive precautionary measures. However even these rudimentary safety precautions were not carried out in this case.

"Despite consistent denials of liability by Thomsons,

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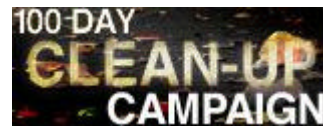
and after a prolonged legal battle, they have finally agreed to pay Mr Ashley the compensation he deserves."

A spokesman for Thomsons said: "The cause and source of the illness has been agreed. This was an isolated incident and there have not been any others since. We are unable to comment further as this is being handled by our solicitors."

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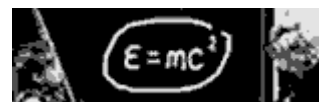
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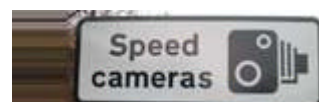
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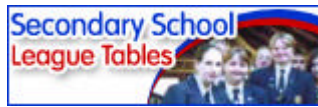
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