

This tells us how it never goes away once you have had Legionella. Doreen Davies's story six years on from the Barrow Outbreak.

LEGACY OF LEGIONNAIRES'

Last updated 09:02, Friday, 19 December 2008

DOREEN Davies was in a coma for 10 days after falling ill during the Legionnaires' outbreak.

Doreen's beloved mother died in that time and she has struggled ever since to come to terms with her sudden loss and on-going health difficulties.

Doreen, 56, of Frederick Street, was admitted to Furness General Hospital on July 24 and put into intensive care until the Legionella antigen was confirmed on August 2. She was on a ventilator after developing respiratory and renal failure and had blood transfusions.

Due to a lack of intensive care beds because of the crisis, she was transferred to Chorley intensive care unit for five days.

Doreen said: "On that particular day, I thought kids were spitting down into the alley but there was spray all over me and some of it went into my mouth.

"A week later I just felt so poorly. I couldn't breath and couldn't get my breath.

"I had terrible diarrhoea and fell down the stairs trying to get down to the phone.

"I got to bed and tried to sleep. I couldn't eat or drink. "I eventually phoned the ambulance at midnight and they took me to hospital. The next day I went into a coma."

She added: "I was so poorly that the doctor sent for my dad. The doctor said 'Mr Smith, can you get here now because her liver and kidneys have packed up. We can't give her any more blood and there's nothing more we can do for her'.

"I was in the coma for 10 days but I must have woken up for a split second that night and there were tears running down my face and beautiful angels in front of me and animals jumping on my bed. I didn't know who I was or where I was."

Legacy of Legionnaires'

Doreen was discharged on August 17 and her medical report said: "This lady had a severe life-threatening legionnaires' pneumonia with multi-organ failure requiring major medical management with intensive care, renal, respiratory and cardiac support."

She said: "When I came home, I was so poorly I couldn't work and lost so much weight. I had no energy and couldn't eat anything.

"My speech and everything is so embarrassing and it's upsetting because I keep getting memory loss and can't remember where my keys are and things like that. I wish I could get my life back."

Doreen received £10,500 compensation but was left unable to work. She had worked in an electronics factory in Manchester from the age of 16 to 47 until she moved to Barrow nine years ago.

As part of her therapy, Doreen wrote a letter detailing all her feelings.

The letter said: "My life has changed, I used to be so bubbly, full of life, smiling and singing. I was so happy. I lived life to the full.

"Even now my immune system is very low. I just wish I could get my life back to the way it was. I am so sad I have been left the way I have."

Doreen explained: "I felt I had to write that letter because nobody has ever been near me. It's not about the money. I've never had an apology and I just felt I had to write it all down to get it out of my system.

"It's been six years now and I'm still having a lot of problems because I was so poorly and I'm still having counselling."

"What upset me more than anything was that I never got to say goodbye to my mum. I just wish she was here and miss her so much.

"She was the love of my life and my soul mate.

"She was 74 when she died and I'm sure she died of a broken heart. I always went to see her in Manchester every fortnight."

A memorial garden is being built at St George's Church in Barrow, which will include a paved area with two benches and a plaque overlooking a grassed area bordered by a hedge.

In a corner of the grassed area, there will be seven rose bushes.

Doreen said: "It's just so sad that all those people died and the way people have been left. I still can't walk down that alley – I would like to but just can't bring myself to do it.

"I was disgusted that they weren't going to do anything because of the poor people who died and the way their families have suffered. When I saw that there was going to be a memorial I was so pleased for the families. People are still suffering."

Legacy of Legionnaires'
