

Legionnaire's Victim Was Given The Last Rites

Feb 21 2008 By Shirley Bartynek

A HAMILTON grandad told this week how he was given only 48 hours to live after contracting Legionnaire's Disease.

Edward McNulty was given the Last Rites after he suffered massive organ failure. It was the discovery of the 50-year-old joiner's infection that last week led to the closure of Hamilton Water Palace. There were fears that Edward contracted the disease from the leisure facility. However, according to South Lanarkshire Council, tests have now proved that the centre was not the cause of the infection.

Edward, who was this week continuing his recovery from the symptoms, fell ill in January with what he thought was a "bad cold". He was diagnosed with a chest infection at Wishaw General Hospital, but the Meikle Earnock man was later released and told to take paracetamol. However, Edward's son became increasingly concerned for his dad's health and some days later phoned him an ambulance.

Edward was rushed to Hairmyres Hospital where they suspected he was suffering from pneumonia. However, further tests proved that he had contracted Legionnaire's.

Edward explained: "The doctors put me into a coma and I was put on a ventilator which helped me to breathe. I don't remember anything about that week of my life. It's really what my family has told me. They were there each day by my bedside. Less than two weeks ago, my family was all called to the hospital. Doctors told them that my lungs had collapsed and that my kidneys had stopped functioning and they basically gave me 48 hours to live. I was dying. I was given my Last Rites. But later that evening something happened and doctors say fresh blood began to pump from my heart. I was beginning to get stronger and was fighting for my life."

Edward, who lost two stone during his illness, made a fast recovery and was soon moved from his room in intensive care to a ward. After undertaking physiotherapy and medication he was released home last week.

He added: "I still can't believe what has happened to me. I have a completely different outlook on life now. My family and friends were amazing during my time in the hospital. They were there each day and sometimes they even slept over in my room. I have nightmares about what happened to me and still can't understand why I am still here. The doctors told me I was a fighter so that is the only explanation I can give as to why I am still living."

Doctors first suspected Edward contracted the disease from Hamilton Water Palace after he told them he was a keen swimmer. Edward, in a bid to get healthy, had been attending the Water Palace four to five times a week. He swam 32 lengths a night and used the leisure centre's jacuzzi and sauna.

He explained: "I really enjoyed using the Water Palace and made a lot of friends there. The guys there even showed me how to change my swimming technique in order to do more lengths. I must admit that when I used the facility last I was run down and had a sore throat but I didn't think anything of it. If anything I thought swimming would help my chest. I am now scared of using the pool again which is really quite sad."

A spokesperson for NHS Lanarkshire said: "An investigation to identify possible sources of a case of legionella has been carried out by the Department of Public Health, NHS Lanarkshire, the Environmental Health Department, South Lanarkshire Council, the Health and Safety Executive and Health Protection Scotland

The investigation has not identified a definitive link between the case and any possible source. Further test results are awaited and the situation is being monitored." A spokesperson for South Lanarkshire Council said: "Test results of water samples from Hamilton Water Palace have failed to establish a link between the Water Palace and the member of the public who suffered from Legionellosis. There have been seven reported cases of Legionellosis in Lanarkshire between 2004 - 2006, five of which were reported in 2006.