

## STYLE

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# 'Death sentence' blamed on barred medic

A woman cannot have surgery for cancer after a doctor in Dumfries, now barred for lying, failed to diagnose a spinal illness

Julia Horton

The family of a woman diagnosed with terminal cancer has blamed her "death sentence" on a doctor in Scotland who has been barred for embellishing his medical qualifications.

Elizabeth Butterfield, 68, learned earlier this month that she has early stage endometrial cancer.

The pensioner has been warned that surgery poses an "enormous risk" and could cause "premature death" due to underlying health conditions.

These include cauda equina syndrome (CES), a rare disorder that affects nerve roots at the lower end of the spinal cord.

Butterfield's family allege that Dr John Dillon, an orthopaedic specialist who worked at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, failed to diagnose CES when she was referred to him in 2010.

Earlier this month, Dillon was barred from practising medicine after a tribunal

ruled that his conduct could put patients at risk.

Dillon has failed to admit any wrongdoing, following an initial hearing in 2016 that found he had lied on his CV to secure a post at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary.

It emerged that he had falsely claimed to have medical college membership – a requirement for the role.

His dishonesty only came to light after a complaint to the General Medical Council (GMC) by Butterfield's family, who insist that he left her paralysed after failing to diagnose CES eight years ago.

Last week, Butterfield's son and full-time carer, Chris, 43, said: "We are devastated. Mum has just been diagnosed with cancer and they won't operate, specifically because of her spinal problems, which Dr Dillon missed and allowed to develop back in November 2010.

"In effect, Dr Dillon's inaction has put her on death row."

Butterfield, who has moved from Dumfries to England with her son, was originally referred to hospital by her GP with suspected CES, which should be treated as an emergency to prevent paralysis.

She alleges that instead of referring her immediately to a specialist for possible urgent surgery, Dillon barely examined

JAMES GLOSSOP



Elizabeth Butterfield, who is unable to have surgery for cancer, with her son and carer, Chris

her before sending her home after diagnosing sciatica – a far less serious and more common nerve condition.

However, an independent consultant seen by Butterfield privately in 2014 concluded that it would have been "appropriate to suspect" that she had CES.

The original hearing in 2016 found that Dillon had lied in his job application and in various journals. He was not struck off

because while he had not completed the application process for any college, he had passed examinations to join the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. As a result, he was judged to have adequate medical expertise.

A ruling against him on October 9 makes permanent several previous temporary bans imposed from 2016 onwards at a series of hearings held to give Dillon a chance to acknowledge his misconduct – which he did not do.

The Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service, which conducts hearings for the GMC, said that despite being offered "multiple opportunities", Dillon failed to show any "insight into his misconduct" and "there may be a risk to patient safety" if he was not barred.

Dillon, who did not attend the hearing, has a month to appeal against the decision. "The health board should have checked his qualifications and he should have been investigated for negligence, but the GMC only looked into his false claims about college membership," said Chris Butterfield last week.

The GMC said all complaints had been investigated fully and it did not comment on individual cases. NHS Dumfries and Galloway refused to comment during the appeal window. There was no response to repeated attempts to contact Dillon.

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## Scots parents creating 'nation of snowflakes'

Jason Allardyce

Social scientists and educationalists have warned that Scottish children are being held back by a generation of well-meaning parents whose kindness is affecting their resilience, confidence and attainment.

Carol Craig, chief executive of the Centre for Confidence and Well-being, argues in a new book that many adults who considered their parents too cold, harsh and critical when they were growing up have gone to the other extreme. Many have become indulgent and permissive, showering their own children with compliments and praise.

In *The Golden Mean*, a collection of essays by experts, she echoes concerns about "generation snowflake" – children who are too feeble and thin-skinned to cope with challenge. She writes: "As life inevitably involves loss, challenge and hurt feelings it is not actually possible to protect children from negative emotions."

Just as scientists have shown that children's health is undermined if they are not exposed to germs as this retards the immune system, Craig says it is understandable that young

people's psychological immune system – their resilience – can be weakened if they do not face adversities and have challenging experiences.

"Children can only learn that they can cope if they meet challenges and manage to bounce back," she writes.

Craig argues that research demonstrates how overprotective, permissive parenting is having a negative health impact on Scottish children, pointing to a survey of 38 countries last year that ranked Scotland joint last for physical activity. She puts this down, in part, to parents stopping children being active outdoors.

In his essay, Chalmers Smith, a former biology teacher who has spent most of his working life involved in outdoor education and advised on the subject for the curriculum for excellence, argues that learning outdoors builds confidence and resilience. He writes: "It's tragic that real opportunities in Scotland for quality outdoor learning have eroded at a time when pupils need its benefits more than ever."

*The Golden Mean: Fostering Young People's Resilience, Confidence and Well-being is published by CCWB Press*

## Ceilidh trips up Oxford college

Shingi Mararike and Josh McStay

It is easy to put a foot wrong at a ceilidh – and now an Oxford University college has been accused of mauling the Scottish celebration.

Brasenose College had promised a traditional ceilidh to mark freshers' week this month, but the event upset some students who claimed it was "inauthentic".

In a complaint lodged with Brasenose's events committee, a student laments that several of the best-known tunes were not played and that billing the event as a ceilidh "confused some of us who were expecting something that reminded us of home". Traditional ceilidhs involve popular dances such as the Gay Gordons, Dashing White Sergeant and Strip the Willow.

The row prompted the president of the college's junior common room

committee to publish an apology this weekend in Cherwell, the university's student newspaper.

"If they didn't want a proper ceilidh, they shouldn't have called it that, and if they did, they should have done more research," a student who attended the event told the publication.

Another said: "It's perturbing to see something so familiar and comforting tampered with to the point it seems alien."

Manish Binukrishnan, president of the Brasenose junior common room committee, apologised to anyone who felt the ceilidh was "an inappropriate representation of Scottish culture". He said: "We're committed to co-ordinating with our Scottish students to make sure the next freshers' week ceilidh is appropriately advertised and that our Burns Night ceilidh is as authentic as possible."

## School heads in a spin

Caroline Wheeler

More than four-fifths of teachers in leadership roles say they suffer from stress that leads them to overeat, overdrink and overspend.

Research for the Education Support Partnership (ESP) shows that 45% of head teachers, their deputies and senior teachers report being stressed most or all the time, up from 37% in 2017.

The study also shows that

52% dealt with their stress and anxiety by eating, 37% turned to alcohol, and 27% admitted needless spending.

More than 1,500 teachers were surveyed for the charity's teacher wellbeing index, to be published tomorrow.

Julian Stanley, ESP chief executive, said: "We must do more to help this group of people so they can be an example to staff and pupils."

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