# NHS introduces 'Jess’s Rule' to prevent missed cancer diagnoses after young woman's tragic death



Jessica Brady, a vibrant 27-year-old from Hertfordshire, tragically lost her life to cancer after her condition was repeatedly missed by her GP surgery despite more than twenty appointments over five months. Her case starkly exposes the gaps in the NHS system that can lead to catastrophic outcomes for patients, particularly younger adults whose symptoms may not fit conventional patterns expected by clinicians.

Jessica’s parents, Andrea and Simon Brady, who have bravely campaigned for change following their devastating loss, inspired the introduction of a new patient safety initiative across NHS England called "Jess’s Rule." This scheme encourages general practitioners to adopt a "three strikes and rethink" approach—if a patient attends three appointments without a diagnosis or with worsening symptoms, the GP must take a fresh look by ensuring face-to-face consultations, seeking second opinions, or ordering further tests. The initiative is part of broader efforts to improve early diagnosis rates, aiming to catch diseases like cancer while still at an early and more treatable stage.

Research underscores the urgency of such measures. Young people and ethnic minorities often face prolonged delays in diagnosis because their symptoms may not align with typical profiles developed around older, white patients. Jess’s Rule, named in her memory, hopes to drive systemic reform to save lives and reduce suffering caused by late or missed diagnoses.

Jessica’s illness was ultimately identified as stage 4 adenocarcinoma, a diagnosis delayed due to multiple virtual GP appointments during which her symptoms, including persistent abdominal pain, were overlooked. The reliance on remote consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic made securing an in-person appointment challenging—a factor her parents insist contributed to the late detection of her cancer. They argue that had Jessica been physically assessed earlier, her symptoms might have been taken more seriously, possibly altering the tragic outcome.

The Jessica Brady CEDAR Trust, founded in her honour, focuses on equipping GPs with better training and resources to spot cancer early, especially in younger adults where symptoms may be atypical. Early diagnosis not only improves patient survival rates but also reduces pressure on NHS resources, enabling support for other patients.

Government figures provide some cause for optimism: over 160,000 more people received cancer diagnoses or had cancer ruled out within 28 days in the year spanning August 2024 to July 2025 compared to the previous year. Additionally, more than 2,000 extra GPs have been recruited, alongside record funding exceeding £1 billion for GP practices in 2025-26, with patient satisfaction on the rise. Yet experts caution that enhanced funding alone cannot solve the problem; systemic reform and genuine engagement with patient experiences are essential.

According to NHS England leadership, Jess’s Rule represents a vital step in restoring confidence in primary care by ensuring doctors reflect when symptoms persist or escalate, thereby preventing future tragedies like Jessica’s. The Brady family continues to work closely with the NHS, advocating for sustained improvements in patient safety and diagnostic vigilance.

Jessica Brady’s story is a poignant reminder of the human cost behind systemic shortfalls and the urgent need for responsive, patient-centred healthcare reform. While Jess’s Rule seeks to change the landscape, many hope it will serve as a catalyst for a deeper transformation in how the NHS listens to and acts on the concerns of all patients—particularly the most vulnerable.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/04/jessicas-cancer-was-missed-20-times-by-gps/), [[3]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1492188/Hertfordshire-woman-died-cancer-five-month-fight-gp-in-person-appointment)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html), [[4]](https://jessicabradycedartrust.org.uk/our-mission)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/04/jessicas-cancer-was-missed-20-times-by-gps/), [[4]](https://jessicabradycedartrust.org.uk/our-mission)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1492188/Hertfordshire-woman-died-cancer-five-month-fight-gp-in-person-appointment), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2021-11-18/she-had-everything-to-live-for-woman-27-died-after-wait-to-see-gp-in-person), [[7]](https://metro.co.uk/2021/03/24/i-lost-my-child-to-cancer-after-she-was-misdiagnosed-with-long-covid-14282776/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://jessicabradycedartrust.org.uk/our-mission), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2021-11-18/she-had-everything-to-live-for-woman-27-died-after-wait-to-see-gp-in-person), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-15123653/WES-STREETING-Jess-Rule-save-NHS-cancer-care.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/04/jessicas-cancer-was-missed-20-times-by-gps/> - This article details the tragic case of Jessica Brady, a 27-year-old woman from Hertfordshire, whose cancer symptoms were repeatedly dismissed by her GP surgery over a five-month period. Despite numerous appointments, her condition was misdiagnosed multiple times, leading to a delayed diagnosis of stage 4 adenocarcinoma. The piece highlights the systemic issues in healthcare that contributed to her untimely death and underscores the need for improved diagnostic practices and patient advocacy.
3. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1492188/Hertfordshire-woman-died-cancer-five-month-fight-gp-in-person-appointment> - This report covers the heartbreaking story of Jessica Brady, a 27-year-old from Stevenage, Hertfordshire, who died on December 20 after battling liver cancer. Despite complaining of abdominal pain five months prior and undergoing a series of virtual appointments, her tumour went undetected. The article sheds light on the challenges faced by patients during the pandemic, particularly the difficulties in securing in-person GP consultations, and the tragic consequences of delayed diagnoses.
4. <https://jessicabradycedartrust.org.uk/our-mission> - The Jessica Brady CEDAR Trust is a charity established in memory of Jessica Brady, aiming to improve GP awareness and diagnosis of cancer. The trust focuses on providing training and resources to general practice doctors to enhance early cancer detection, particularly in young adults. The mission underscores the importance of early diagnosis in improving survival rates and addresses the disparities in cancer detection among different age groups.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2021-11-18/she-had-everything-to-live-for-woman-27-died-after-wait-to-see-gp-in-person> - This news piece discusses the case of Jessica Brady, a 27-year-old woman who died of cancer after struggling to secure a face-to-face GP appointment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her parents, Andrea and Simon Brady, believe that had Jessica been seen in person, her symptoms might have been taken more seriously, potentially leading to an earlier diagnosis. The article highlights the broader issue of access to healthcare during the pandemic and the impact on patient outcomes.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/people-gps-wes-streeting-government-england-b1249114.html> - This article reports on the introduction of 'Jess’s Rule' across GP surgeries in England, a patient safety initiative named in memory of Jessica Brady. The rule encourages GPs to adopt a 'three strikes and rethink' approach when patients return with worsening or undiagnosed symptoms. It aims to ensure that cases are reviewed after three appointments without a diagnosis, promoting early diagnosis and preventing avoidable deaths.
7. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/03/24/i-lost-my-child-to-cancer-after-she-was-misdiagnosed-with-long-covid-14282776/> - In this personal account, Andrea Brady shares the devastating experience of her daughter, Jessica, who was misdiagnosed with long COVID despite presenting symptoms indicative of cancer. The article sheds light on the challenges faced by patients and their families in navigating the healthcare system, particularly during the pandemic, and the importance of patient advocacy and persistence in seeking accurate diagnoses.