# Blood clot misdiagnosis at NHS 111 service leads to tragic death of Sheffield mother



Natasha Hewitt, a 35-year-old mother from Sheffield, tragically died from a blood clot in her brain after NHS 111 helpline call-handlers failed to recognise the severity of her symptoms and misdiagnosed her condition as an ear infection. Natasha had sought medical advice multiple times as she endured severe, migraine-like headaches that began suddenly, dizziness, and an inability to stand. Despite these alarming signs, she was advised to consult her GP rather than being urgently referred to hospital or given an ambulance, a delay that proved fatal.

Prior to the fatal incident, Natasha had been treated at a walk-in medical centre with antibiotics and painkillers for a suspected ear infection. On subsequent calls to NHS 111, despite describing the intense headache as feeling like "someone had hit her with a brick," the call handlers did not escalate her care to emergency services. It was only after her condition worsened and her husband Nick called 999 that Natasha was rushed to hospital. She was diagnosed with cerebral venous sinus thrombosis—a large blood clot blocking veins in the brain—and was transferred to a specialist unit for surgery. Unfortunately, she died two days later, leaving behind her husband and their young son, Harry. The inquest into her death concluded that neglect and missed opportunities in her care contributed to her passing.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service, which runs the NHS 111 service, has admitted a breach of duty in Natasha’s care, acknowledging that had her condition been diagnosed earlier, she would likely have survived. The trust issued an unreserved apology and stated that the incident was fully investigated with lessons learned to improve future care. Natasha's husband described her as a devoted wife and mother, heartbroken at the loss and determined to share her story to prevent similar tragedies.

Natasha’s case highlights the difficulties and dangers in diagnosing blood clots in the brain, which can manifest with symptoms that mimic less serious illnesses like ear infections or migraines. Cerebral venous sinus thrombosis is a rare but serious condition involving blood clots in the brain’s venous sinuses, impeding normal blood drainage. According to NHS information, symptoms include sudden severe headache, eye swelling, double vision, and high temperature. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are crucial to prevent brain damage or death.

This case is not an isolated example of fatal misdiagnoses related to NHS 111. Another tragic incident involved Chloe Ellis, who died from a pulmonary embolism after her risk assessment was not properly shared between NHS 111 and Accident & Emergency departments. Similarly, a detailed clinical risk study revealed a misdiagnosis of a brain haemorrhage in a patient whose symptoms were initially mistaken for a urinary tract infection, leading to fatal consequences. These cases underscore systemic issues within the NHS regarding communication between services and timely urgent care referrals.

The urgency of immediate diagnosis and treatment in brain clot conditions is well demonstrated by emergency cases such as that of a young girl with a subdural haematoma, who required rapid brain surgery to relieve pressure caused by a clot. Such interventions significantly improve outcomes when timely administered. Medical literature also stresses the importance of recognising early stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) symptoms—temporary blockages in brain blood flow often caused by clots—as prompt treatment within hours can prevent severe brain damage or fatality.

Natasha’s family, already marked by previous painful experiences including multiple miscarriages and neonatal complications, now face the profound loss of a devoted mother and wife. Her story is a stark reminder of the critical importance of thorough and swift medical assessment and treatment pathways, especially in services like NHS 111 that serve as gatekeepers to emergency care.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66888009)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66888009)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66888009)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/brain-nerves-and-spinal-cord/transient-ischaemic-attack-tia)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.slatergordon.co.uk/newsroom/lack-of-nhs-information-sharing-contributed-to-womans-death/), [[4]](https://www.tmlep.com/clinical-learning/2019-12-18-a-clinical-risk-case-study-misdiagnosis-of-brain-haemorrhage)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/newsitem/one-false-move/), [[7]](https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2017/blood-clots-brain-warning-signs-symptoms-fd/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66888009)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15142147/Mother-died-blood-clot-brain-mistook-fatal-symptoms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66888009> - An inquest into the death of Natasha Hewitt, 35, from Sheffield, concluded that her death from multiple blood clots was preventable. Despite seeking medical advice for 'migraine-like' symptoms, her condition was misdiagnosed, leading to missed opportunities in her care. The coroner ruled that neglect contributed to her death, and her family expressed feelings of being 'let down on several occasions'.
3. <https://www.slatergordon.co.uk/newsroom/lack-of-nhs-information-sharing-contributed-to-womans-death/> - Chloe Ellis, 29, died from a pulmonary embolism after NHS 111 failed to communicate her risk assessment to the A&E department. Misdiagnosed with a respiratory infection, she was discharged but collapsed and died three days later. An inquest found that the lack of information sharing contributed to her death, prompting calls for standardised sharing of NHS 111 assessments.
4. <https://www.tmlep.com/clinical-learning/2019-12-18-a-clinical-risk-case-study-misdiagnosis-of-brain-haemorrhage> - A clinical risk case study highlights the misdiagnosis of a brain haemorrhage. A patient presented with severe headache and vomiting but was diagnosed with a urinary tract infection. Despite worsening symptoms, no brain scan was performed. The patient was found unconscious the next day, and a CT scan revealed a large intracerebral haemorrhage. Unfortunately, no surgical treatment was possible, and the patient died.
5. <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/newsitem/one-false-move/> - A 12-year-old girl, Tulsi, was airlifted to St George’s Hospital after a severe head injury. CT scans revealed a subdural haematoma—a blood clot within the head—putting pressure on her brain. Emergency brain surgery was performed to remove the clot and alleviate pressure, highlighting the critical nature of such injuries and the need for prompt medical intervention.
6. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/brain-nerves-and-spinal-cord/transient-ischaemic-attack-tia> - A Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) occurs when there's a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain. The blockage resolves before any significant damage, unlike a full stroke, which disrupts blood flow for a longer period, leading to more severe damage. TIAs are often caused by blood clots that travel to the brain's blood vessels.
7. <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2017/blood-clots-brain-warning-signs-symptoms-fd/> - Blood clots in the brain can lead to strokes or death by blocking or bursting blood vessels. Common signs include sudden weakness or numbness in one arm, slurred speech, and facial drooping on one side. Immediate medical attention is crucial, as treatment within 4.5 hours of the first symptom can significantly improve outcomes.