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## Mother who had surgery for breast cancer is stunned to be told she'd NEVER had the disease - and had been victim of 'hospital mix-up'

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- Elizabeth Dawes was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2013
- Doctors advised a double mastectomy but she refused, instead undergoing extensive surgery to remove a tumour and reconstruction afterwards
- Four days later she was told staff had confused her notes with those of two other patients and that she had never had the disease
- Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust has admitted liability and apologised

By [LIZZIE PARRY FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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A nurse who faced surgery to treat breast cancer at the hospital where she worked discovered just days later that she'd never had the disease.

A mix-up at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton meant staff confused the notes of three patients.

As a result, Elizabeth Dawes was wrongly told in July 2013 that she had invasive grade three breast cancer following a biopsy.

Doctors advised the 39-year-old that she needed immediate surgery, suggesting a double mastectomy.

Ms Dawes refused, but did undergo major surgery to remove a 'cancerous' tumour from her right breast as well as lymph nodes from her armpit.



© Irwin Mitchell

Elizabeth Dawes, 39, was told she had breast cancer in July 2013. Doctors at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton told her she needed immediate surgery and chemotherapy. But four days after the operation she was told staff had confused her medical notes with those of other patients, and she'd never had cancer

The mother-of-one was also told she would need a further procedure to correct 'deformities' to her breasts caused by the first operation.

But four days later, Ms Dawes was asked to attend an appointment with her consultant.

There, he revealed there had been a mix-up with her hospital notes and those of two other patients, - and she had, in fact, never had the disease.

She said: 'I am absolutely appalled at what I have been through and am still struggling to comprehend how this could even happen.'

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'To be told you are facing aggressive cancer in your 30s is devastating and of course, I feared the worst and began making plans for my child, and getting my finances in order.'

'I was willing to undergo whatever treatment it took to fight the cancer so when I was told I needed surgery, I didn't think twice.'

Ms Dawes was so traumatised she needed antidepressants and was forced to give up her job in the oncology department at New Cross Hospital.

, added: 'The doctor also told me I would need a bilateral breast lift to cosmetically improve the shape of my breasts, as otherwise, after having the cancer surgery I would be left deformed.'

'I was very sore after the operation and shocked by the extensive scarring, so to be recalled four days later to be told none of it was necessary was truly horrendous.'

'I am still in pain now, have lost a lot of sensation in my breasts and the scarring has not improved, which hugely affects my self-confidence.'

'Nothing can make up for what has happened but I am determined to see justice done and feel I at least deserve an official apology from the Trust given the huge impact this has had on my life.'

Ms Dawes, who has an 18-year-old son, is taking legal action.

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, which operates the hospital, has admitted liability for the misdiagnosis and the unnecessary surgery performed.



The mother-of-one, who was working as a breast cancer care nurse at the same hospital at the time, said: 'To be told you are facing aggressive cancer in your 30s is devastating and of course, I feared the worst and began making plans for my child, and getting my finances in order'

Lawyer Louise Hawkey, of Irwin Mitchell, said: 'This is a truly shocking case that has left Elizabeth appalled at the unnecessary heartache, and extensive scarring she has suffered as a result of being wrongly told that she had breast cancer.'

'There are also very serious patient safety concerns about the "mix-up" and how the other patients have potentially been affected too.'

She said aside from the 'obvious physical implications', the ordeal has had 'a devastating impact' on her client's life.

Ms Dawes had worked as a breast care nurse in the Oncology Department at New Cross Hospital but has since found herself unable to continue in her role 'as a consequence of what she has been through'.

Ms Hawkey added: 'It is also vital that the Trust identifies what improvements can be made to ensure that this never happens again to improve patient safety at the hospital.'

A trust spokesman told MailOnline it has apologised to Ms Dawes and carried out a full investigation.

He said: 'The medical director and nurse director met with Ms Dawes to offer her an unreserved apology for this terrible error and inform her of the trust's investigation into the incident.'

'The findings of the investigation were shared with Ms Dawes and a further apology offered at that time.'

'The incident is now part of an ongoing legal claim with which the trust is co-operating fully.'

**“To be told you are facing aggressive cancer in your 30s is devastating and of course, I feared the worst and began making plans for my child”**

Elizabeth Dawes

**“No other patient received inappropriate treatment as a result of this incident”**

Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust spokesman

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A lot on her plate



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Geordie Shore star is maintaining her figure





'The trust can confirm that no other patient received inappropriate treatment as a result of this incident.'



The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, which operates the hospital, has admitted liability and a spokesman said an apology had been issued to Ms Dawes. He added no other patient received inappropriate treatment

Read more:

[Healthy nurse has cancer surgery after notes mix-up | The Sunday Times](#)

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Man's best friend



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**Rae Ann Gibbs**, Corpus Christi, United States, 6 months ago

My sister does have breast cancer and I am trying to raise money for her surgery on crowd rise and gofundme. Please help, CLARA WILLIAMS FROM CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

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7



**Carolina**, Holland, 6 months ago

There's something called "second opinion" that one should get when being diagnosed with something serious. In Holland there was a neurologist, not too long ago, who decided many of his patients had Alzheimer's and his license was taken away, then he went on to work in Germany and kept misdiagnosing. One misdiagnosed Dutchman sold everything he had and was waiting to go to a care home when everything came out about the neurologist. Turns out he didn't have Alzheimer's. People think doctors are Gods, but they're really like mechanics: the majority are normal, many make mistakes and only a few are wonderful and caring and truly amazing.

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**EmmaJo**, Some City, Christmas Island, 6 months ago

Ghastly! In case of a dire diagnosis, it might be a wise idea to get a second, or even a third, opinion. Poor woman!

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	<p><a href="#">enemde</a>, corby, 6 months ago</p> <p>£££££.....KERCHING !!!</p>	<div>Click to rate</div> <div>  8         </div> <div>  19         </div>
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	<p><a href="#">HavingAnOpinion</a>, Malaga, 6 months ago</p> <p>"Staff had confused her notes".....were the staff able to read English? So many hospital staff do not have English as their first language these days which is always a little worrying.</p>	<div>Click to rate</div> <div>  50         </div> <div>  3         </div>
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	<p><a href="#">rapier</a>, london, 6 months ago</p> <p>NOT surprised! A few years ago, my wife was told she had TB and the hospital wanted her early AM the following day. After a short time with the SO-CALLED specialist, who I challenged to a BET of £1000, she DID NOT have TB, which he turned down, she went for X-ray. Radiologist said: WISH I could see a perfect pair of lungs like yours every day. Specialist STILL insisted she had TB. Nine months later, after health problems from medication, they in a sort of way, admitted she had never had TB. SO, someone was walking around with TB who had been told, you are fine. A year later, the same hospital said a TEENAGER did not have TB and was mixing with his mates at school for a year. IT was his GP, who diagnosed he had TB! OH, the reason I challenged the specialist was: I lived with my grandfather, who had TB for 13years, so, I knew the symptoms &amp; reactions of the body!</p>	<div>Click to rate</div> <div>  32         </div> <div>  1         </div>

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