

Echo

Inquest hears of 'serious failings' at Basildon Hospital

12:40pm Wednesday 30th November 2011

A PATIENT died of Legionnaires' disease due to "serious failings" at [Basildon Hospital](#), an inquest found.

Raymond Cackett, 54, from South Ockendon, contracted the fatal lung condition in February this year after being admitted to the hospital.

He died a month later at the hospital.

A three-week inquest into his death, held at Chelmsford Coroners Court, culminated when the jury return a "narrative verdict" which raised concerns over his care and determined the hospital had not done enough to control the bug.

The narrative verdict from the jury said: "We find in light of the evidence heard that there were serious failings in the control of legionella at the hospital."

Legionnaires' disease is caused by the legionella bug which can thrive in water systems and air conditioning units.

The hospital has been rapped in the past for failing to control outbreaks of the bug from as far back as 2002.

During the inquest it came to light the man in charge of stamping out Legionnaires' disease at [Basildon Hospital](#) at the time of Mr Cackett's death had no formal training. Basildon Hospital chief executive Alan Whittle conceded more needs to be done to eradicate the bug and pledged to take on board the jury's concerns.

He said "We will consider the jury's verdicts very carefully and take on board what they have said."

He stressed the hospital was doing all it could to eradicate the legionella bug and had spent £2million on maintaining its water systems since 2002.

He added: "Controlling legionella in a hospital water system is an extremely complex and challenging issue, as the inquest heard. We are advised by acknowledged national experts, and the evidence at this inquest has been, that eradicating it is practically impossible. But we accept there is always more to be done.

"We are not complacent. We will continue to explore every option and invest in more and better control measures, in line with scientific evidence and expert advice."

The double-headed inquest also looked into the death of James Compton, 74, of Kings Road, [Billericay](#), who died in June 2007 having contracted C-difficile at the hospital.

However after considering the evidence the jury concluded the infection was not a "direct cause of any failure on the hospital's part".