



[Home](#) [News](#) [U.S.](#) | [Sport](#) | [TV&Showbiz](#) | [Australia](#) | [Femail](#) | [Health](#) | [Science](#) | [Money](#) | [Video](#) | [Travel](#) | [DailyMailTV](#) | [Discounts](#)

[Latest Headlines](#) [Covid-19](#) [Royal Family](#) [Crime](#) [Boris Johnson](#) [Prince Harry](#) [Meghan Markle](#) [World News](#) [Headlines](#) [Most read](#)

[Login](#)

What IS the truth about Covid deaths? Grieving relatives along with MPs and top medics demand inquiry as families reveal MORE loved ones they believe were wrongly certified as virus victims

- Medical experts have demanded an inquiry into the number of fatalities that have been blamed on Covid-19
- More than 100 Daily Mail readers wrote letters after Bel Mooney revealed her father's death recorded as covid
- Experts cited pressure on doctors to use Covid-19 as cause of death because it was ruled 'notifiable disease'

By [GLEN KEOGH](#), [ARTHUR MARTIN AND CLAIRE ELLICOTT FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

PUBLISHED: 22:02 GMT, 26 February 2021 | **UPDATED:** 09:15 GMT, 27 February 2021

39k
shares

6.8k
[View comments](#)

Grieving families last night said deaths had been wrongly certified as Covid-19.

Demanding an inquiry, top medical experts and MPs also insisted they were 'certain' that too many fatalities were being blamed on the virus.

One funeral director said it was 'a national scandal'. The claims are part of a Daily Mail investigation that raises serious questions over the spiralling death toll.

More than 100 readers wrote heartbreaking letters following a moving article by Bel Mooney last Saturday. She revealed the death of her 99-year-old father, who suffered from dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, was recorded as **coronavirus**.



© PA

+16

Layla Moran (pictured) , the Liberal Democrat MP who chairs the all-party parliamentary group on coronavirus, said: ‘The Government should call a public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic immediately with an interim investigation into all Covid deaths that should report as soon as possible’

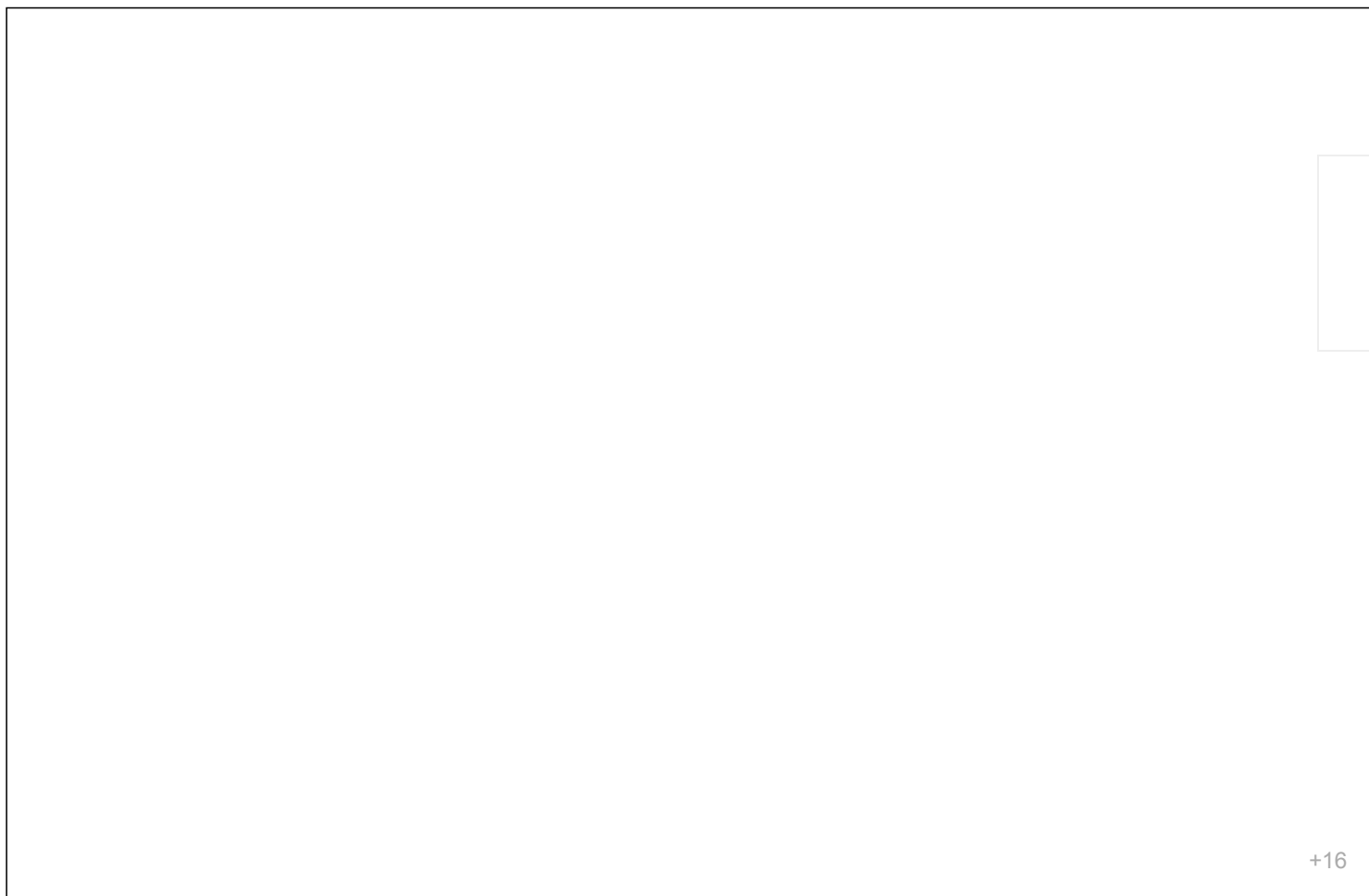
Dozens expressed similar frustrations that the causes of death of elderly and already-unwell relatives had been wrongly attributed. Eight of the families who wrote to the Daily Mail have successfully urged doctors to change causes of death previously recorded as Covid-19.

Layla Moran, the Liberal Democrat MP who chairs the all-party parliamentary group on coronavirus, said: ‘The Government should call a public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic immediately with an interim investigation into all Covid deaths that should report as soon as possible.’

Tory MP Paul Bristow, a member of the Commons health committee, said: ‘It’s almost certain that a number of deaths have been wrongly attributed to Covid-19.

‘Not only has this skewed figures when data has been so important in deciding how we respond to the pandemic, it has caused distress and anxiety for relatives.

‘Whether we have received the most appropriate figures should definitely be considered in any future inquiry.’



Tory MP Paul Bristow (pictured), a member of the Commons health committee, said: ‘It’s almost certain that a number of deaths have been wrongly attributed to Covid-19’

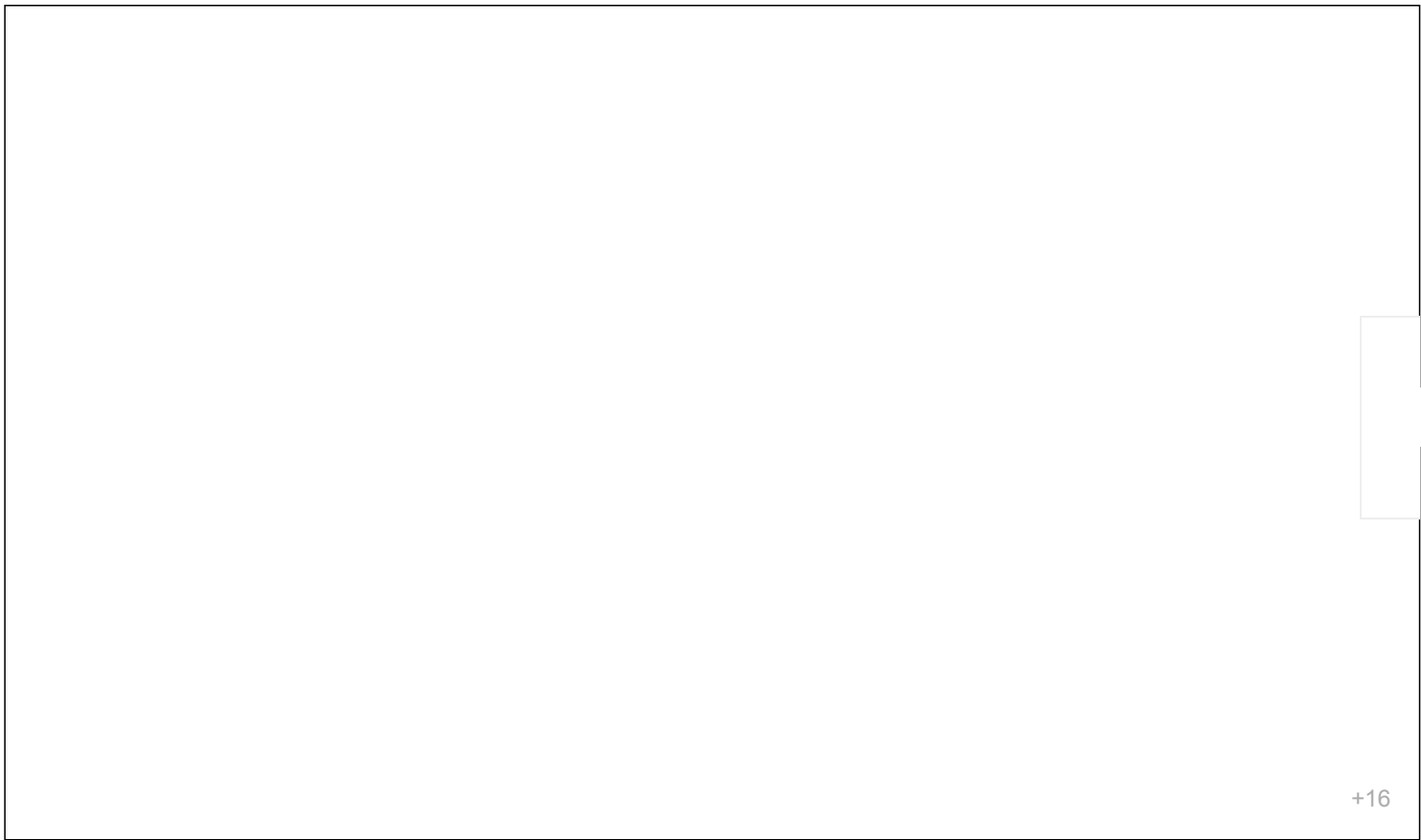
A funeral director in the North West told the Mail: ‘The way Covid has been recorded and reported is a national scandal and a thorough enquiry should be opened immediately.’

Medical experts have cited pressure on doctors to include Covid-19 as a cause of death because it was last year ruled a 'notifiable disease', meaning any case needs to be reported officially.

Professor Clare Gerada, former chairman of the Royal College of GPs, said: 'When this all comes out in the wash, we will find out we have over-recorded Covid-19 as a cause of death.'

Richard Vautrey, who chairs the British Medical Association's GP committee, said the toll may have been overstated at the beginning of the pandemic when testing was not widely available and 'cause of death would have been based on best judgement of clinical symptoms'.

A Department of Health spokesman said: 'We are confident the death statistics are robust and provide an accurate picture of those who have sadly died from the virus. The guidance to doctors completing a medical certificate of cause of death explains they are expected to state cause of death to the best of their medical knowledge and belief.'



Richard Vautrey (pictured), who chairs the British Medical Association's GP committee, said the toll may have been overstated at the beginning of the pandemic when testing was not widely available and 'cause of death would have been based on best judgement of clinical symptoms'

After the Mail's BEL MOONEY revealed her father was wrongly certified as dying of coronavirus, an avalanche of responses show she is far from alone

Special investigation by Paul Bracchi and Arthur Martin for the Daily Mail

There are three things you should know about the last few weeks of Jessie Wylde's life.

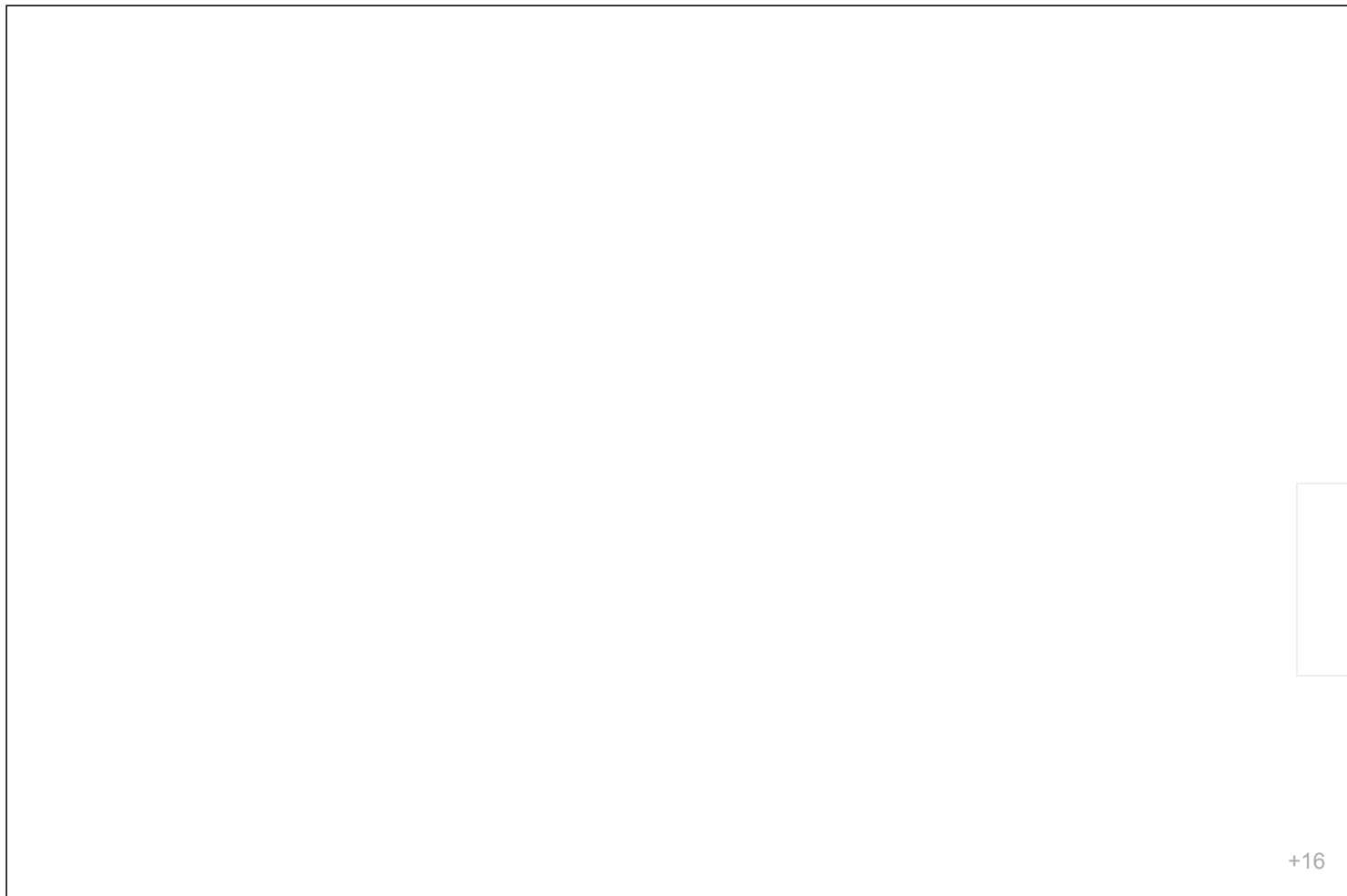
The first is that she had dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a lung condition that causes severe breathing difficulties; the second is that she was a resident at Aldergrove Manor care home in

Wolverhampton; and the third, that at the time Jessie, 83, was a resident at Aldergrove, at least, there were no confirmed cases of Covid.

She was transferred there at the beginning of last year from the high dependency unit at the city's New Cross Hospital, where she was being treated for respiratory problems.

On April 26, around three months after leaving hospital, Jessie died.

Shortly before her death, a doctor at Aldergrove assessed her and confirmed that she had COPD.



More than 100 readers wrote heartbreaking letters following a moving article by Bel Mooney (right) last Saturday. She revealed the death of her 99-year-old father (pictured), who suffered from dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, was recorded as coronavirus

Yet despite being given such a diagnosis, despite the absence of an outbreak of Covid in Aldergrove and despite not testing positive for Covid herself, the cause of Jessie's death was registered as Covid.

The revelation compounded her family's grief.

'I told the registrar that I would not accept this,' her son Gary said when we spoke to him this week. 'I said, "I will never, ever allow the cause of my mother's death to be registered as Covid".'

The person who made that decision was an on-call doctor.

When he found out, Mr Wylde, 59, the managing director of a windows firm, contacted Aldergrove's regular doctor, who knew Jessie.

'The doctor explained to me that in the absence of a test, doctors are encouraged to put down Covid on death certificates,' he said. 'But he agreed that my mother was suffering from COPD and severe dementia, and he also agreed to get the death certificate changed. This only happened because I challenged it.'

Jessie, who separated from her husband when her five children were grown up, was much loved. She went on to become a grandmother of nine and a great-grandmother of 16, which gave her much joy in later life.

'I didn't want my mother to become just another statistic,' explained Mr Wylde. 'The least she deserved was to have the right information included on her death certificate.'

Her certificate now says that the cause of death was chronic pulmonary disease (COPD) and dementia.

The word 'Covid' was removed.

The Wylde family are not alone; people nationwide, we now know, who have suffered bereavements during the pandemic have had a similar experience.

Their alarming testimonies have been forwarded to this newspaper following Bel Mooney's moving account, in last Saturday's Mail, of the death of her 99-year-old father in the early hours of February 9. He had passed three Covid tests but was still classed as one of Britain's 120,000 Covid victims. When Bel questioned this, the care home doctor, she says, explained it was because there had been Covid fatalities on the same dementia floor.

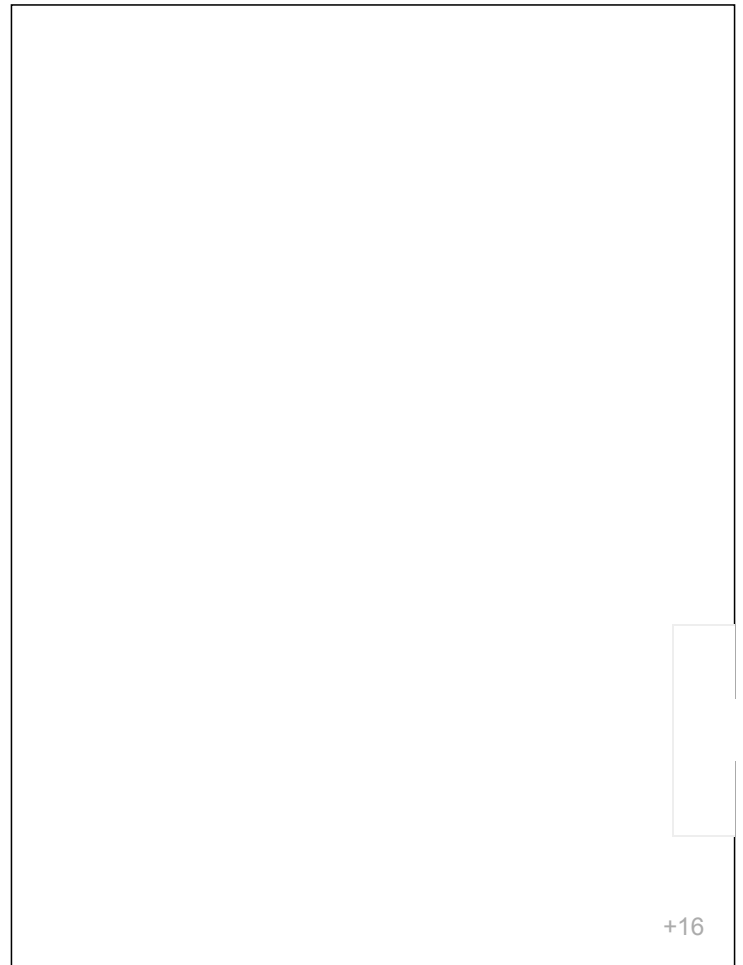
More than 100 families contacted us in the aftermath of Bel's report and, at the time of writing, letters were still coming in:

'Dear Bel, I am writing to let you know that I had exactly the same experience when my mother sadly passed away' . . . 'Dear Bel, the same thing happened to my dad' . . . 'Dear Bel, I had the same problems when my darling wife passed away.'

Among the 'postbag' were eight families, including the Wylde, who managed to get the death certificate or a doctor's medical certificate cause of death (MCCD) — containing the information needed to register a death — changed because they refused to accept that a loved one had died from Covid and challenged the clinical diagnosis.

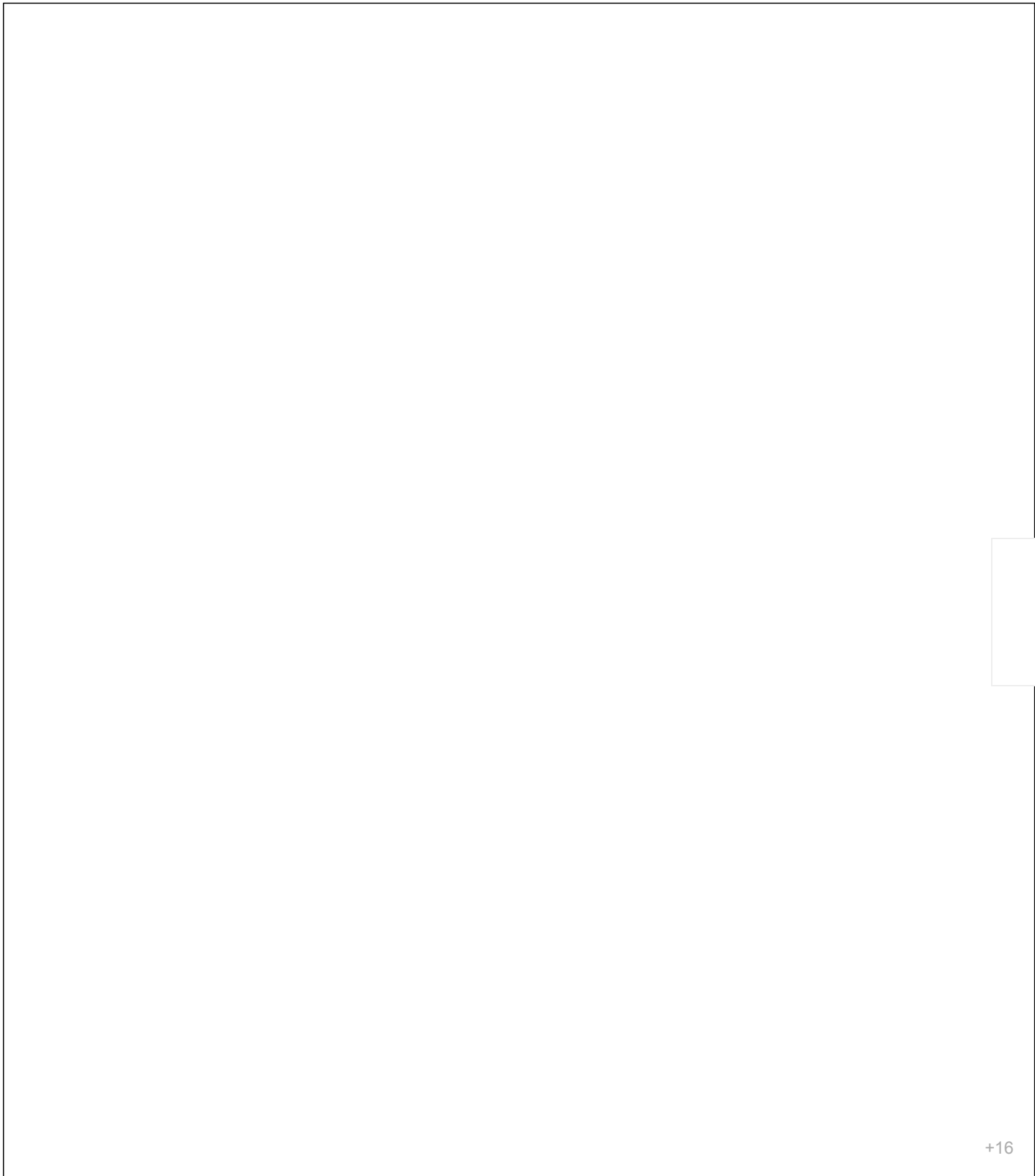
Others said they had not pursued such a course of action because they didn't want to exacerbate the grieving process.

Common sense tells us that these can't be the only examples. But why is this happening? The reasons, are — as we shall explain — as complex as the pandemic itself. Over-stretched doctors, anxious to do the right thing in an unprecedented situation where the recording of incidents of Covid is a legal requirement, would account for the most.



Jess Wylde, who died in April 2020, pictured as a bridesmaid as a teenager

Also, of course, there's human error, doctors' questionable judgement and possibly those drawn towards the easiest and most convenient path when faced with impossible workloads.



+16

There are three things you should know about the last few weeks of Jessie Wylde's (pictured) life. The first is that she had dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a lung condition that causes severe breathing difficulties; the second is that she was a resident at Aldergrove Manor care home in Wolverhampton; and the third, that at the time Jessie, 83, was a resident at Aldergrove, at least, there were no confirmed cases of Covid

But let's make one thing absolutely clear: it is nonsense to suggest, as conspiracy theorists and virus deniers would have you believe, that doctors en masse are deliberately falsifying certificates to exaggerate the number of Covid deaths to justify behavioural and travel restrictions; in other words, that this all part of some government plot.

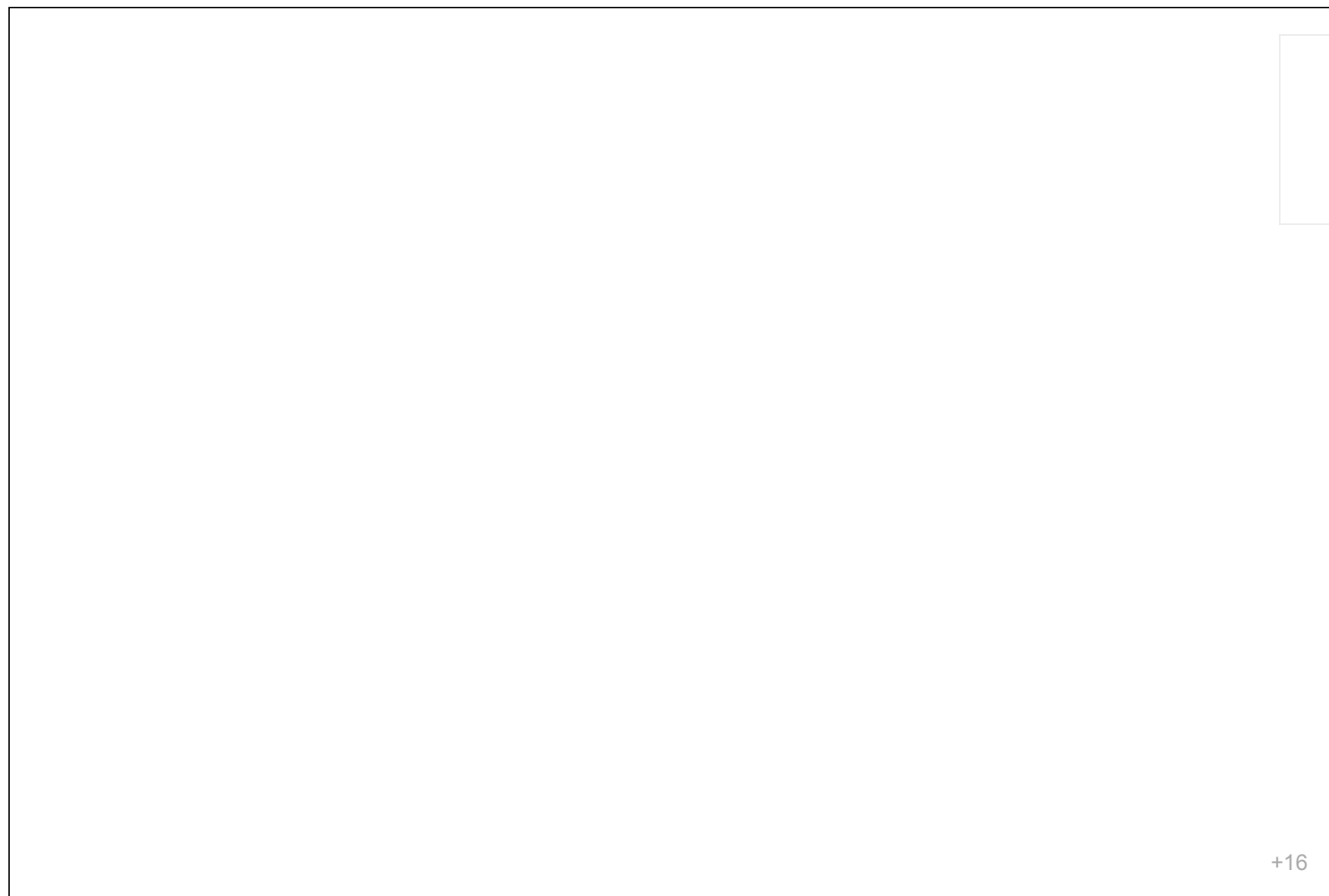
That said, the evidence that some deaths are being wrongly attributed to Covid, like for example, Jessie Wylde, is compelling.

So too are the accounts of families with elderly relatives who were already receiving end of life care suffering from, say, COPD, heart disease or cancer, when they contracted the virus; they had the virus, in other words, but, in the eyes of their families, they didn't die from Covid but were still classified as Covid deaths.

In households across the country this alone has caused untold anguish, if the response to Bel Mooney's article is anything to go by; for many families, rightly or wrongly, Covid is seen as a stigma — a 'plague' as Bel puts it — which has exacerbated their grief.

This is the hidden story behind the statistics; what the people who have been writing to the Mail in their droves over the past week are telling us.

It is why distinguished retired pathologist John Lee believes that he can 'think of no time in my medical career when it has been more important to have accurate diagnosis of a disease and an understanding of precisely why patients have died of it.'



+16

Bel Mooney's father Edward was wrongly certified as having died from coronavirus

There is no accepted international standard of how you measure Covid deaths; trying to rank different countries to decide which is the worst in Europe is, to quote one leading statistician, a 'completely fatuous exercise'.

In Britain, there are two parallel reporting methods; two different sources of statistics.

One set compiled by Public Health England (PHE) records the number of deaths of people who died within 28 days of a positive test result, which does not mean the person died of Covid — although it is likely they did — just that they died following a positive test.

These are the figures collated on the government's Covid-19 dashboard — a way of keeping the public informed on a daily basis — which appear nightly on the TV news.

SHARE THIS ARTICLE

RELATED ARTICLES



German leaders rebel against Merkel's strict lockdown and...



Dad who died while being pinned down by four security guards...



Fury over next plan of Covid vaccine roll-out: Police chief...

The most comprehensive figures, and the ones trusted by the medical establishment, are those published every week by the ONS (Office for National Statistics). They reflect what doctors responsible for a patient in their final illness write on death certificates to the 'best of [their] knowledge and belief' whether the deceased has tested positive for Covid or not. One reason for this wording is that some studies have found that one in five swabs may give false negatives; so everything depends on the doctor.

It is the area which is causing the most controversy, especially in care homes, which account for a quarter of a" Covid deaths.

One of the reasons is because the rules surrounding certifying a death have been relaxed during the pandemi

In the past, the certifying doctor needed to be treating the patient or know them and have seen them recently during this emergency period, when doctors are under increasing pressure — or self-isolating — there is no requirement for them to have examined the patient. A video-link consultation in the four weeks prior to death (extended from 14 days) is now sufficient for a death to be attributed to Covid.

It was an on-call doctor, not the regular care home doctor, remember, who said Jessie Wylde died from Covid, a clinical decision which her family successfully challenged by having her death certificate changed.

'Doctors in this situation sometimes neither have the time or the necessary back-up to reach the right conclusion,' said Daily Mail columnist Dr Martin Scurr, a former GP and consultant in palliative care.

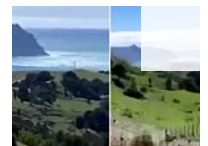
Hancock: 'Number of cases down to 1 in 145' but decline is slowing

MORE VIDEOS

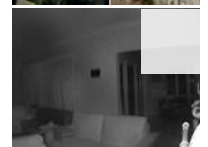


Watch the full video

Video captures waves rolling in along coast in NZ after earthquake

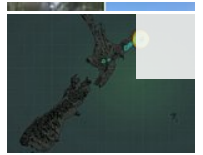


Footage of moment 7.2 magnitude earthquake hits North Island in NZ



NZ residents waiting to see if tsunami comes after earthquake

Visualisation of NZ earthquake as well as numerous aftershocks



Media player controls including play/pause, volume, and time (0:00 / 9:04). Social sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, and others, along with a settings gear and a share icon.



+16

'They often have to rely on the reports of care home staff, many of whom do not have formal medical training. Inevitably, in these circumstances, certificates can be issued which look right but turn out to be wrong.'

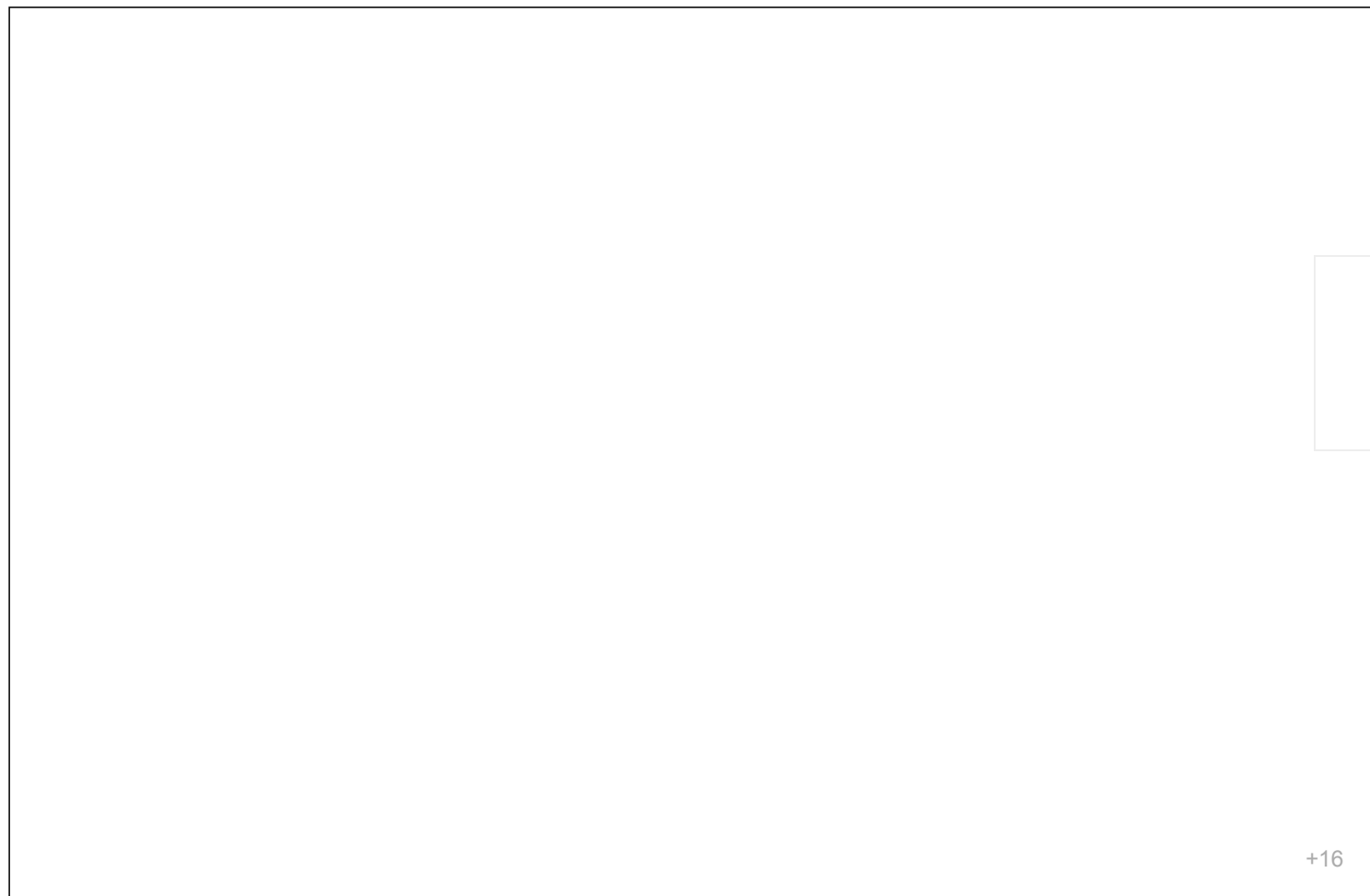
And any reference to Covid on a death certificate, either directly as an underlying cause or as a contributory cause, and the death will be recorded as a Covid death in the ONS statistics.

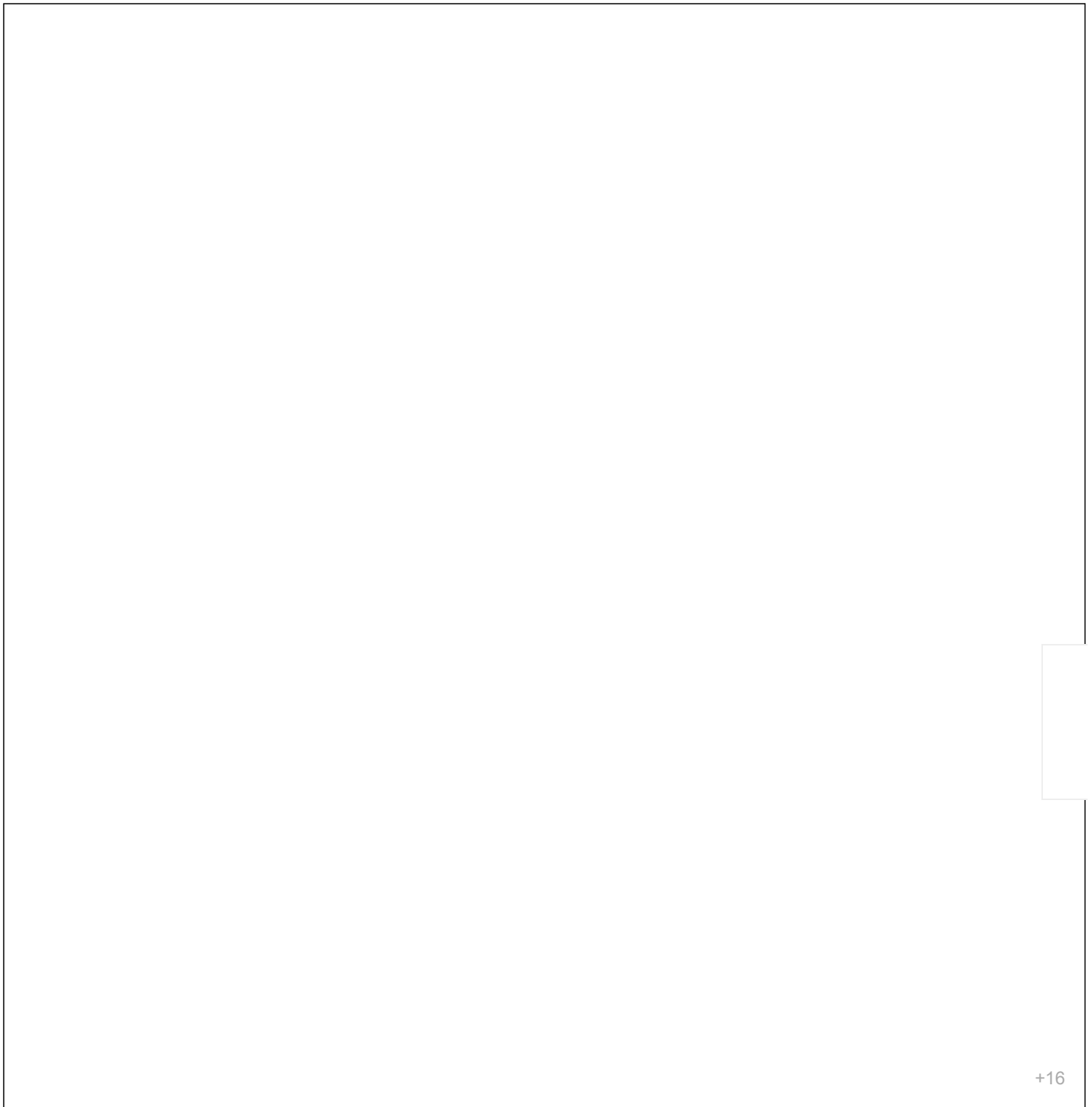
Covid is a 'notifiable disease', and doctors have a legal duty to report any incidence of the virus.

Might this explain what the doctor at the care home in Wolverhampton, where Jessie Wylde died, meant when he was challenged by her son after discovering his mother was about to become 'another statistic'?

'Doctors are encouraged to put down Covid on death certificates,' Mr Wylde was allegedly told, when the doctor tried to explain why she had been wrongly classed as a Covid victim.

It is hard not to avoid the suspicion that the default diagnosis of overstretched, under-pressure GPs is to mention Covid somewhere on the death certificate.





+16

'Death certification has never been a precise science,' a recent article by a consultant in geriatrics and acute general medicine in the British Medical Journal reported.

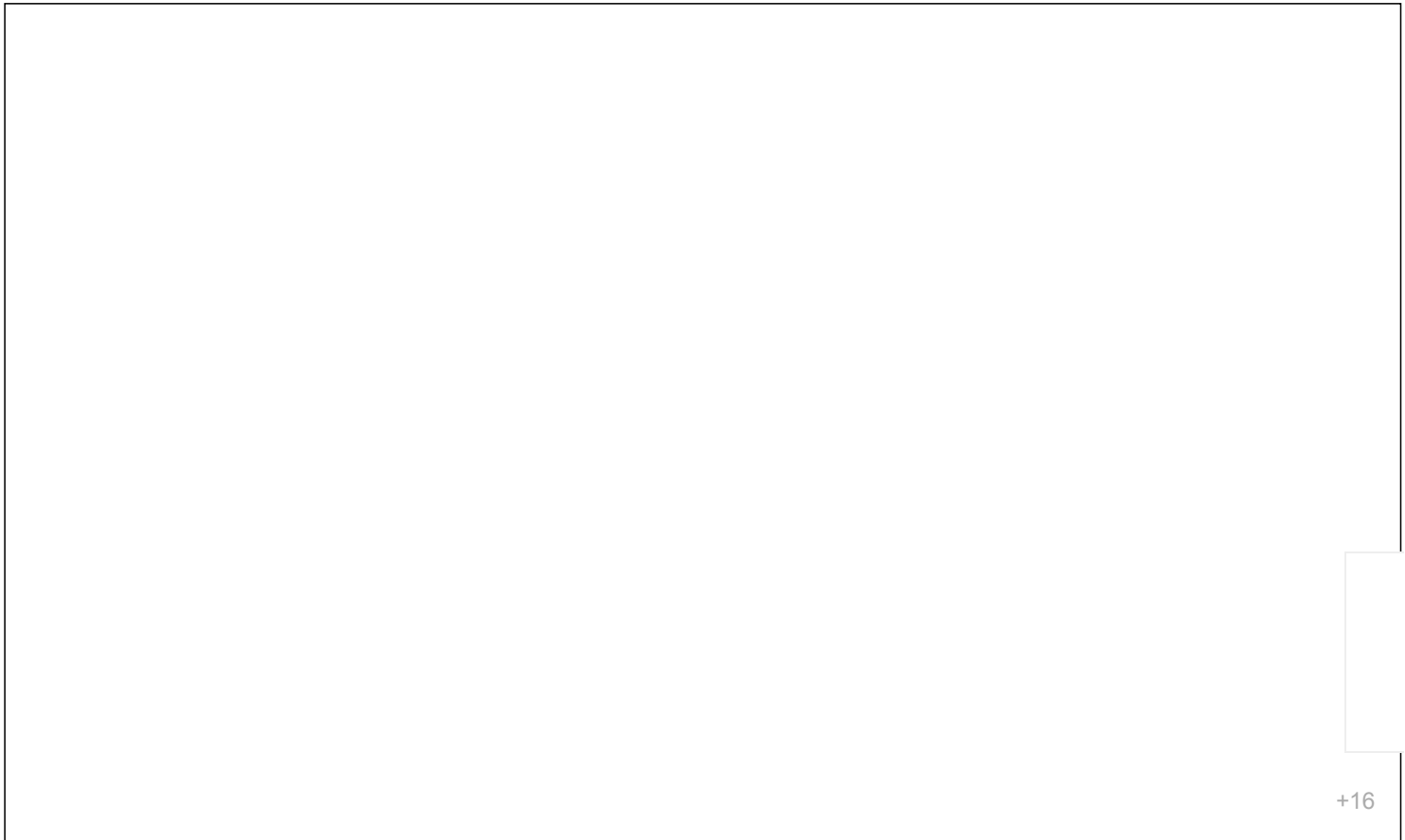
The consultant said that 'sometimes there is a cluster of simultaneous acute problems which we could easily switch as they all happened so close together and were all serious.'

Few are better placed to offer an opinion on this matter than Stephen Johnston, a funeral director from Cumbria.

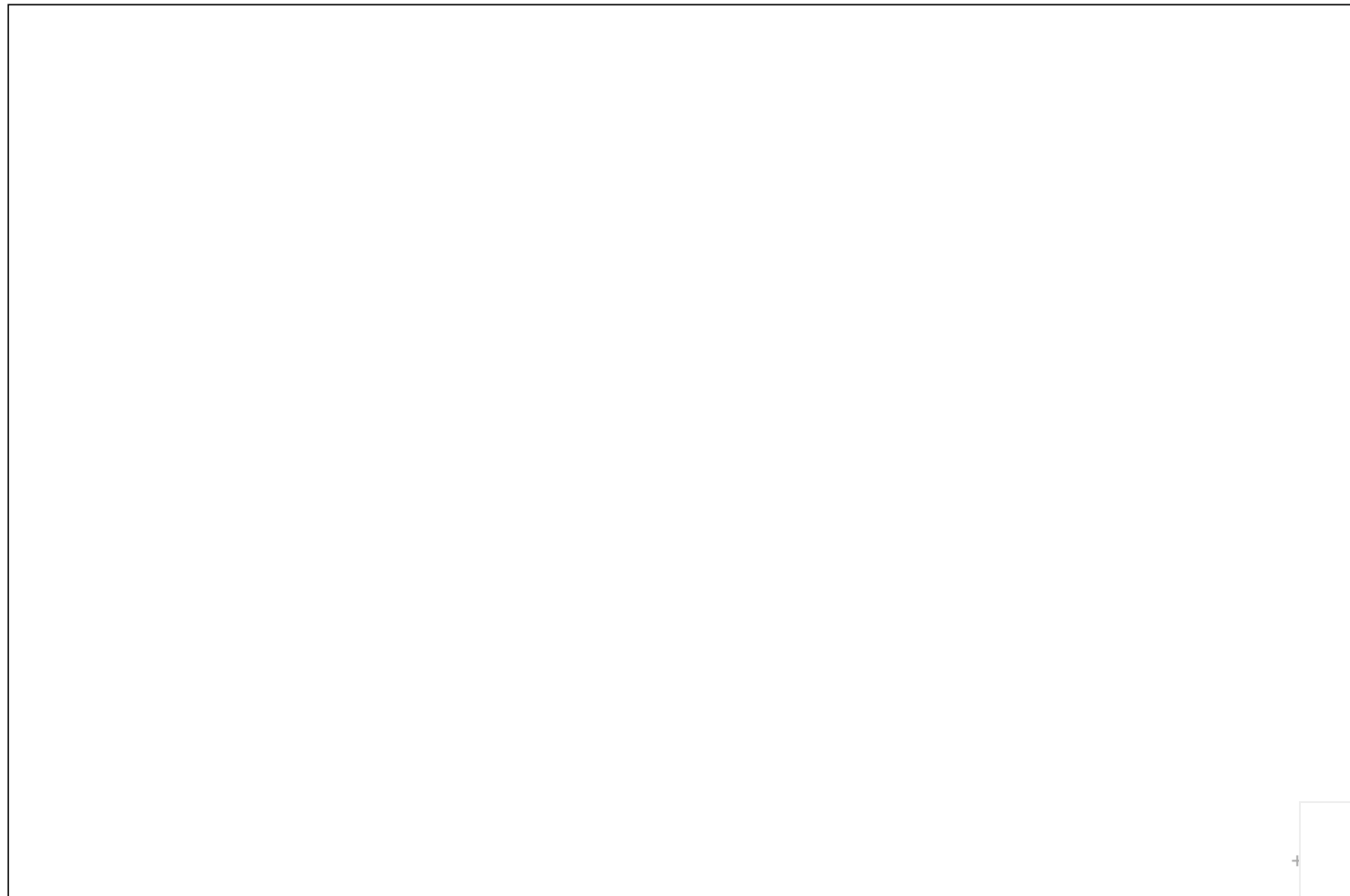
'I have arranged funerals for quite a lot of people whose families have disputed Covid-19 being put down as the main cause of death when they don't think it should have been,' he said.

'In a number of cases, the deceased has gone into hospital already seriously ill from life-threatening conditions, such as COPD, heart disease, kidney disease, liver failure and cancer, having had three or four negative Covid tests. While in hospital, they have had another test, which is positive, and then passed away and the death is recorded as Covid.

'I think families are upset because there is a little bit of stigma attached to a Covid death that people don't like. They are more comfortable with very elderly family members passing away peacefully in their sleep.'



+16



The Office for National Statistics found Covid cases had halved in a fortnight across England. It said 373,300 would be detected in any given day over the period to February 19

One of the families we spoke to was that of Tony Ennos, 96, who was receiving end of life care when, two days before his death, he tested positive, which meant Covid went on the death certificate. ‘He died of heart failure, not Covid,’ his son Richard said.

David Brighthouse, 72, was terminally ill with Multiple System Atrophy, a rare neurodegenerative disorder, but tested positive shortly before his death, which meant Covid went on the death certificate. ‘I feel strongly that Dad died of his existing illness,’ his daughter Julie said.

It was a similar story for David Sutcliffe, 81, who suffered from vascular dementia and Alzheimer’s, and had been clear of Covid for more than six months before he died last October. And publishing giant Naim Attallah, 89 — believed to be suffering from terminal cancer — whose death was nonetheless attributed to Covid when he died in February. His last test came back clear, and he’d even been vaccinated against the virus four weeks before his death.

The complexity of the different recording methods makes it difficult to estimate the scale of the shortcomings highlighted today.

What is undeniable is that record numbers of people have been dying since the pandemic began; this is not fake news.

But are the statistics always telling the whole truth?

... and the families who fought back

WE COULDN'T SAY GOODBYE TO HIM

On his death certificate, the cause of office cleaner Maurice Cummings' demise was given as 'Clinical Covid-19 Pneumonia'.

Just hours before he died on the Avon ward at Warwick Hospital on July 10 last year, he had been tested for the virus and the result, just as it was in the two he'd had in the previous seven weeks, was negative.

Mr Cummings, who would have been 77 on Monday this week, had never tested positive for the virus and showed no symptoms, his bewildered family say.

When they asked why his death had been attributed to coronavirus by the doctor who signed the certificate, the family say they were told by the hospital's bereavement officer: 'We didn't detect the virus but some doctors still like to put it on the certificate.'

Mr Cummings, a father-of-two from Warwickshire with four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, was admitted to the hospital days earlier after becoming unwell and unresponsive at home.

His wife Pauline believed his ill health was the result of years of osteoporosis and sclerosis.

The couple's eldest daughter, Tracey Cummings, 56, said that although the family didn't challenge the doctor's judgment, they were 'suspicious'.

Ms Cummings, a teaching assistant who lives in Leamington Spa, said: 'There's no way he had Covid. He was tested the day he died and the next day the result came back as negative and he had absolutely no symptoms.'

'When the bereavement officer phoned us two days later and informed us that's what it said on his death certificate, we were appalled. She said it was common practice for some doctors.'

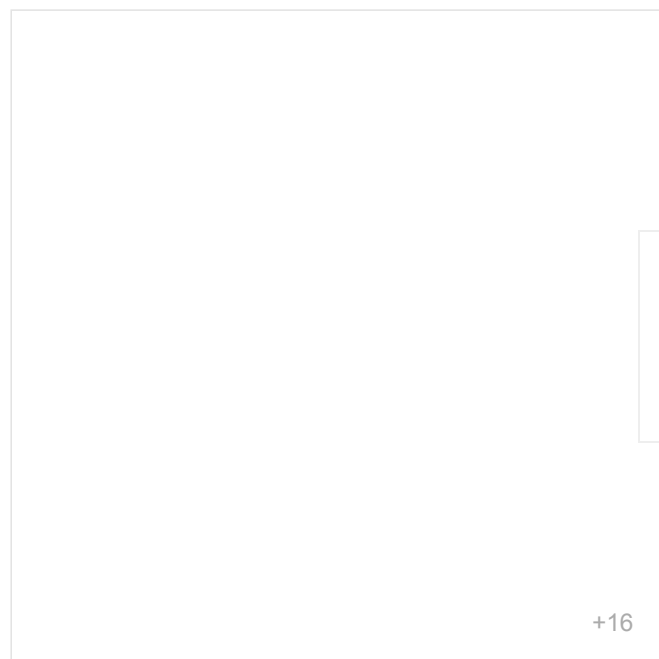
'To make matters worse, the undertakers told us that because of the Covid factor, we weren't allowed to say goodbye to him in the chapel of rest, dress him in his favourite clothes and beloved Elvis belt or carry his coffin at his funeral. Instead, they put him in a plain shroud, which Dad would have hated.'

We were shocked - it's just not right

When Ted McMahon died two months short of his diamond wedding anniversary, his three children — one of whom is a nurse — believed a stroke had killed him.

Yet his death certificate stated he had died from Covid-19, despite testing negative for the virus just four days before he passed away at Charnwood Oaks care home in Shepshed, Leics.

Retired road worker Mr McMahon, pictured with wife Anne, had four grandchildren and a great-grandchild. He was admitted to the nursing home with dementia in November 2019.



When Ted McMahon died two months short of his diamond wedding anniversary, his three children — one of whom is a nurse — believed a stroke had killed him. Yet his death certificate stated he had died from Covid-19

He died aged 84 on May 3 last year, six days after running a high temperature the home believed was Covid.

A test on April 30 came back as negative and his daughter Debbie McMahon, a nurse, put the high temperature down to an undetected stroke, according to his other daughter, Julie Perkins. Civil servant Mrs Perkins, 57, said: 'Debbie spent a lot of time with him leading up to his death and she believes he was showing all the signs of having had a stroke.'

'So we were extremely shocked when the GP wrote he'd died of the virus on his death certificate, despite the

A hospital spokesperson said: 'We can't comment on individual patient cases. In general terms, doctors give the cause of death according to their clinical opinion on the evidence available. They wouldn't ascribe Covid as the cause of death unless there was clinical evidence to support that.'

'The causes of death on the death certificate are checked by the Medical Examiner for deaths. It is well described that in some patients with Covid pneumonia the virus is deep in the lungs and cannot be detected in the nose and throat, so a negative test result could be returned.'

'Covid pneumonia can be diagnosed by the clinical presentation and the results of blood tests and the findings on X-rays and CT scans and not solely via a specific Covid test.'

Mr Cummings' daughter Tracey last night refuted the notion put forward by the hospital that Covid could have been present in his lungs despite the negative test.

She said: 'Dad was admitted into hospital without any obvious Covid symptoms. No high temperature, breathing difficulties, or loss of taste or smell. Covid-19 is a respiratory disease. Surely this would result in breathing difficulties?'

She said no one at the hospital had told her the virus could have been present in his lungs despite the negative test.

I JUST WANT THE TRUTH, THAT'S ALL

In the weeks before her death, Barbara Bell tested negative for Covid four times. Her husband John was by her side every day in her final week. He never caught the virus.

Despite this, a doctor wrote on her death certificate that Covid was the main cause of Mrs Bell's death on October 15, at the age of 71.

When Mr Bell, 77, challenged this, he was told that Covid was listed because it was difficult to distinguish it from triple pneumonia, which is what she was suffering from. He was unable to change the cause of death on the certificate.

Mr Bell, from Scunthorpe, said: 'What would make me feel better, and all the others probably experiencing the same or similar, would be the bloody truth, and that's all.'

'When I spoke to the medical examiner's office he said because the pneumonia was very similar to Covid they had to put it down as Covid.'

negative test result four days before he died. It's just not right.'



I knew it wasn't Covid so I was extremely angry

Glenis Taylor tested negative for Covid twice in the day before she passed away at the age of 63. Despite this, her death certificate says she died from the virus.

Her husband of 43 years, Rob, pictured with her, was incensed and demanded a post-mortem. This was sanctioned by a coroner and the examination found no evidence of Covid in her body.

'I was extremely angry when they told me that the consultant had written Covid on the death certificate,' he said. 'I knew she didn't have Covid. She tested negative and so did I.'

'I was angry with him. I said I didn't want it on the death certificate because it's not right, but that was the stock answer that I got.'

He said he and his three daughters were lucky to have been able to visit his wife in Glenfield hospital in Leicester before she died and hold a funeral for her.

Mr Bell said his daughters also did not catch the virus, despite visiting their mother in the final days

Mrs Bell, a full-time mother, was the second youngest of 12 children.

SHE HAD NEVER TESTED POSITIVE

Sue, a grandmother to seven children, died aged 74 at her Somerset care home on June 3 last year after suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She repeatedly tested negative for Covid.

Nevertheless, her GP blamed the virus for her death. It was only when her furious husband, Alan — who asked not to be identified — contacted the surgery to object that the Covid diagnosis for his wife, a retired sales executive, was withdrawn.

Alan, 79, said: 'There was no Covid in the care home and she had never tested positive for it. She'd had no test in the 24 hours before she died.'

'I told the surgery there was no way on earth I was allowing them to put the word Covid anywhere near her death certificate and I had to fight tooth and nail to persuade them to see my point of view.'

Additional reporting: Nic North and Archie Mitchell



Glenis Taylor tested negative for Covid twice in the days before she passed away at the age of 63. Despite this, her death certificate says she died from the virus

'I spoke to another doctor and she said: "I can't see any evidence of Covid here either".'

Mr Taylor, 65, from Peterborough, suspects Covid was put down on his healthcare assistant wife's death certificate to avoid further investigation into how she died.

He added: 'I want to know what the real cause of death is. And one of the main reasons I want to know what she died of is if it's hereditary, I've got to tell my three children.'

Mrs Taylor had been unwell for 18 months before she passed away with osteoarthritis in her knees and bronchial problems.



Ridiculous! He had no symptoms

The family of flamboyant publishing and magazine king Naim Attallah were stunned to see Covid on his death certificate — when doctors believed he had terminal cancer.

The colourful Palestinian-born London businessman went to see his physician in Harley Street on December 9, 2020, complaining of stomach pains and was admitted to University College Hospital the same day.

Between admission to the ward on December 9 and his death on February 9, he had four Covid tests and only the third was positive. The last one, four days after the positive one, came back clear.

He showed no symptoms of Covid and had been vaccinated against the virus four weeks before his death.

Doctors suspected his stomach pains were due to cancer but Mr Attallah, 89, pictured with Nigella Lawson, declined procedures to confirm their suspicions because they were too invasive.

His son Ramsay said: 'It is ridiculous what they wrote on the death certificate. The funeral director said they are dealing with family upon family saying Covid was not the cause of their loved one's death.'



+16

The family of flamboyant publishing and magazine king Naim Attallah were stunned to see Covid on his death certificate — when doctors believed he had terminal cancer



Share or comment on this article: Grieving relatives demand inquiry after loved ones have been wrongly certified as virus victims

39k shares

About time! This is a total scandal. by [thesaxman](#) 9852



Comments 6880 Share what you think

Add your comment

- Newest
- Oldest
- Best rated
- Worst rated

View all

The comments below have not been moderated.



Loading...

View all

The views expressed in the contents above are those of our users and do not necessarily reflect the views of MailOnline.

We are no longer accepting comments on this article.

MORE TOP STORIES

Back to top

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [U.S.](#) | [Sport](#) | [TV&Showbiz](#) | [Australia](#) | [Femail](#) | [Health](#) | [Science](#) | [Money](#) | [Video](#) | [Travel](#) | [DailyMailTV](#) | [Discounts](#)

[Sitemap](#) | [Archive](#) | [Video Archive](#) | [Topics Index](#) | [Mobile Apps](#) | [Screensaver](#) | [RSS](#) | [Text-based site](#) | [Reader Prints](#) | [Our Papers](#) | [Top of page](#)
[Daily Mail](#) | [Mail on Sunday](#) | [This is Money](#)
[Metro](#) | [Jobsite](#) | [Mail Travel](#) | [Zoopla.co.uk](#) | [Prime Location](#)

Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd
Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

[Contact us](#) [How to complain](#) [Leadership Team](#) [Advertise with us](#) [Contributors](#) [Terms](#) [Do not sell my info](#) [Privacy policy & cookies](#) 

