

TEENAGER Graeme McGinn thrashed around in pain in his hospital bed. Suddenly he sat up, stared at his mum and said: "I love you."

Fighting back tears, mum Jacky says: "I didn't realise it then, but they were the last words my son would ever say to me."

Graeme had been admitted to hospital with a broken arm. Within five hours he was dead.

Jacky, 47, and her husband Tony, 48, still can't believe their son is gone and are haunted by the fact he could have survived with the right treatment.

Sixteen-year-old Graeme, a trainee mechanic, had skidded and fallen off his moped on a dark country lane on a Saturday night in May 2004, and was taken to the Great Western Hospital in Swindon.

Jacky, a sales administrator, says: "When we got the call from the police saying that Graeme had fallen off his moped and broken his arm we were worried, but not frantic."

"But when we got to the hospital Graeme didn't seem himself. He was very dazed and confused, and very agitated, which was unlike him. He was also very thirsty and kept asking for water. He kept wanting to get up but when he did he was in a lot of pain."

"He said his chest was hurting. Then he started to shout, saying someone was sitting on his chest. We were shocked and tried to calm him down. He didn't seem to know where he was. When they X-rayed him



SHOCKED: Lauren went hysterical

a big orderly had one hand holding his head down and the other holding his feet down as he wasn't able to keep still because of the pain.

"It was awful. He was thrashing around, out of it. Then all of a sudden, he sat up, looked at me and said, 'Mum, I love you'."

Doctors seemed puzzled by Graeme's behaviour but Jacky and Tony still thought their son would be fine - after all, a broken arm was hardly life-threatening.

The couple were taken to the relatives' room to wait for news but when they went out to get some air a little while later they were met with a horrifying scene.

Jacky says: "All of a sudden the alarm bell went off and everyone started to run into the resuscitation room where Graeme was."

"The nurse ushered us back into the room. She told us Graeme's heart had stopped, but that they would get it going again."

Tony says: "I started praying and kept praying until three doctors and a nurse walked back in and told me to sit down."

"They told us Graeme's heart had stopped beating, that they'd tried to resuscitate him, but he had died."

"My world fell to pieces. I remember falling to the floor and screaming. This awful wailing noise was coming out of my mouth."

Graeme had been admitted to hospital at 12.30am and at 4.50am he was dead.

Jacky says: "I was crying, more out of disbelief. Our son had a broken arm, and now he was dead?"

"The doctors said Graeme suffered more damage than they'd first thought. He had massive internal injuries - and there was

Doctors said he had broken arm

SO WHY IS OUR SON DEAD

He was dazed and confused, and extremely agitated, which wasn't unlike him

nothing more they could have done for! When the couple arrived back at the home in Swindon, they had to breathe terrible news to their daughter Lauren now 21.

Lauren says: "I'd got up early because I thought it was strange they hadn't come back from the hospital. Then I saw the car parked and there was just the two of them - there was no Graeme."

"They were crying as they walked through the door and I said, 'Why are you crying?' But I knew. They didn't see anything and I just lost it, I went hysterical."

The next day the family returned to the hospital to say their goodbyes to Graeme but it was too much for his dad to handle.

Jacky says: "Tony just broke down outside the hospital. He wouldn't move. I didn't know what to do or how to cope with him being like that. He's always been the man of the house and I always turned to him for support."

It took several days before the family could begin to accept their son was really gone.

And then they began to question whether his death was really the tragic accident it seemed.

Tony says: "I knew something wasn't right. I had to get things sorted in my head, so I wrote everything down that I'd seen that night. Graeme

Pictures: DAVID HARTLEY

had had bruising and grazing down his torso where he'd come off his moped. I was there when they cut off his T-shirt in hospital so it wasn't as if the doctors and nurses didn't see it."

"We learned his agitation, disorientation and his thirst were all textbook symptoms of internal injuries, so why was this missed?"

The family got some answers at Graeme's inquest in July 2005. The coroner said he'd suffered chest and abdominal injuries and the severity of them hadn't at first been recognised by medical staff.

They had decided to wait for a CT scan before performing a laparotomy - a surgical examination of the abdominal organs. The coroner said Graeme would have had a chance if the op had been performed earlier.

In January, Swindon & Marlborough NHS Trust admitted liability for Graeme's death and offered £15,000 in compensation.

A letter on behalf of the NHS Litigation Authority said: "Had earlier surgical intervention been sought, this would have resulted in a timely arrest of internal bleeding and Mr McGinn's life would have been saved."

Jacky says: "It has taken us two years to get justice, but it's a hollow victory because it doesn't get our son back. He is still dead."

A statement from Great Western Hospital said: "The death of Graeme McGinn was particularly tragic as he was such a young man. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family, to whom we have apologised unreservedly for the shortcomings in the care we provided."

"We have accepted liability and a claim for compensation has been agreed. As with any serious incident of this nature we have learnt lessons from it and actions have been taken to prevent a similar situation happening again."

"We know we can't put this right for Graeme's family and friends but, because of this tragic incident, services will be safer for others. The staff involved have been deeply affected and we all send our deepest condolences."

Jacky and Tony are still fighting to find out exactly who was responsible for his death and have contacted the General Medical Council to ask for an investigation.

The grief has taken its toll on Tony - last year he had a pacemaker fitted.

"I'm convinced it's because of what happened to Graeme," he says. "When I talk about him my heart actually hurts."

"No one should have to bury their own child. The wounds are still as sore and as raw and as open as they were on the day Graeme died, but it doesn't always show. You learn to put a brave face on it."

Jacky adds: "I still think he's going to come through the door. He'd barge in, take his helmet off and say, 'What's for dinner mum?' He was always hungry!"

But I have to face the fact that I will never see him again."

BY AMANDA REVELL-WALTON

TELL US YOUR STORY!

If you have an amazing true life story it could appear in the Mirror. Email us at yourlife@mirror.co.uk with your contact details and an outline of the story.

The wounds are still as raw as the day he died but you put on a brave face



GRIEVING: Mum Jacky and dad Tony

WE'VE become a nation of extremes. On the one hand we have an epidemic of obese children, with eight-year-olds weighing in at 14 stone. On the other, we have eight-year-olds who have become anorexic in their effort to stay thin.

Diet disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating have hardly been seen before in young children.

Rare before puberty, the number of cases rises steeply to a peak at 14, and mostly affects girls who develop early.

This epidemic of worrying thinness in children is a recent one, and has been discovered through a year-long survey reported yesterday.

By questioning 2,600 doctors, 206 cases of eating disorders were reported. More than a third were full-blown anorexia, and nearly a fifth were boys.

The youngest with anorexia was six years old and half of the children - more than 100 -

Dr Miriam

gets to the heart of..



...ANOREXIC CHILDREN

were so ill they were hospitalised for in-patient treatment, and 20 needed feeding by tube.

Society is obsessed with being thin

WE have brought this suffering on our children because of our obsession with size-zero models and celebs. Girls are being made conscious of their bodies when still very young.

The consequence of everyone being more aware of what they eat is that children become "infected" with society's obsession with thinness.

How can they escape when parents are even debating what should go in a child's lunchbox?

The problem is that children become ill very quickly if they don't eat properly, but don't show signs until it's almost too late.

So how can you spot if your child is getting dangerously worried about their size?

- They cut out anything they think is fattening.
- They turn vegetarian.
- They exercise fanatically.

If your child isn't growing properly, is a bit pale and thin, and is a fussy eater, that's the time to speak to your doctor.