Sarah - Treatment

VOICEOVER

Sarah Green, a 22 year old student, was referred by her General Practitioner to the local Mental Health Service following failure to improve from anxiety and depression (as treated by a private psychologist). On referral her medications were an antidepressant for the treatment of her anxiety and depressive symptoms, and a sedative used to help treat her insomnia.

Sarah had never received treatment from mental health services before. However she accepted care from the Community Assessment and Treatment Team (CAAT), in her own home, where she lived with her parents, Mr and Mrs Green.

Following assessment by the team's psychiatrist, Dr Appletree, Sarah was diagnosed as having a major depressive episode agitated with psychotic features. Her medications were ceased and she was commenced on a different anti-depressant medication (that also assists with sleep) and an antipsychotic medication.

Sarah and her parents were very much in favour of her treatment continuing to occur at home. Sarah was in agreement with medications, and agreeable to daily home visits from the treating team.

Records showed that Sarah identified, after a couple of weeks, that her mood was starting to improve. Team decided to reduce visits to twice weekly. She contacted the treating team stating that her mood had deteriorated and had run out of tablets, and that the absence of the anti-psychotic medication had obviously made a negative difference. The antipsychotic medication was subsequently reinstated. Her suicide risk was assessed as moderate; this was an increase over her previous low scores.

At the beginning of home visiting her family was engaged, but subsequently the team only spoke to Sarah. No specific information was given to the family about how to monitor Sarah and when hospital treatment might be required.

The day after a home visit from the treating team, Sarah committed suicide by an overdose of Paracetamol.

The service conducted an external review in order to improve their practices and processes.