

TRANSCRIPTION
Audio time: 0:06:49
Marthas legacy lives on.mp4

[00:00:07] In September of 2002, our daughter, Martha, died. She went to bed and in the morning, when her father went to wake her up, she was dead.

[00:00:18] Martha was our eldest child. She was quite an achiever. She was highly intelligent and probably the most passionate and compassionate person I've ever known. She used to spend so much time with her youngest sister. The two of them were nine years apart, so it was like the fun mum. She had had illnesses through her teens and had decided that she wanted to help people who were ill. So she was studying nursing so that she could follow that dream.

[00:00:52] And we waited for the autopsy reports, the toxicology reports; we waited to find out what had happened to our daughter. People don't just go to bed and not wake up the next day. The autopsy came back with no visible sign of death. The toxicology came back. No alcohol, no illegal drugs. So they classified her death as natural and closed the file. For our family, that wasn't enough. We said, "We really have to know more. We want to know what's gone on."

[00:01:24] So at that point, we set out. We got political involvement. We got media coverage. We put a lot of pressure on to have an inquest to find out what had gone wrong, so that we could prevent it from happening again.

[00:01:42] Well, Martha had a couple of medical conditions. Martha did everything she could to get better, and she was within the health care system trying to get well. And a series of mistakes kept happening that ultimately cost her her life. She had a bit of a potassium deficiency, and she also had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, so she had mood swings. And in the summer of 2002, she was put on lithium. Martha had some issues with low potassium, so there was a recommendation in her file that she shouldn't be prescribed lithium. The report that said that Martha shouldn't be given lithium was written by a psychiatrist because they're the ones that treat bipolar disorder. But the next psychiatrist that took over when this psychiatrist left the practice decided that he didn't think the risk was that great, and he didn't discuss the risk with Martha; he just told her that she should try lithium and that it often had a positive effect on people. So there's no obligation on one doctor's part to follow the recommendations of another doctor.

[00:02:56] She also had a lot of rapid heartbeat incidents that she'd had checked out and some EKGs done and things, and she was told that it was just anxiety. I went to her billing records, and I located all the EKGs I could find and I sent them to the coroner's office. In the end, they

day. And so we have to take these horrific incidents and learn all we can to help prevent it from happening to others and improve things.

END OF TRANSCRIPT