Hugh's Story

as told by his mother

My son pointed out elevators which he believed were the hard drives of a world computer system, on the same day that he was approved to make his own medication decisions.

When I called the hospital to report that my teenager had set fire to the hair on his legs and head, the doctor calmly explained that this did not meet the guidelines for him to receive psychiatric treatment. Three weeks later, after he was on the psychosis ward, the hospital staff were shocked that my son was setting fire to his own hair.

My son wanted to call police to explain that we "had pushed" him. When police asked him to be assessed at a hospital, the police were very kind. The officer helped my son pack some belongings in order to go to hospital. It was then that my son proudly showed the police his one-way ticket to India and his visa from the Indian consulate, explaining that his plan to get healthy was to be in sunshine and attend a karate school in India. Our family had no clue that he had bought a plane ticket — we were lucky to have called 911 that particular day.

Hugh died at 38. His family shares his story so that no other family has to learn what they learned too late: the system waits for a person to ask for help, even when the illness has taken away their ability to know they need it.