

Fresh review launched following anniversary of death of Gaia Young

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By Nathalie Raffray Senior Reporter

Gaia Young, a former pupil at Camden School for Girls (CSG) died of an unexplained brain condition after falling ill on July 17, 2021.

The 25-year-old became violently sick after spending the day cycling in the sun, according to her mother Dorit Uhlemann, Lady Young, with whom she lived in Gibson Square, Barnsbury.

Lady Young held a vigil outside University College London Hospital (UCLH) on July 21, the first anniversary of her daughter's death.

Medics at UCLH initially suspected Gaia, whose father was the late social activist and Labour peer Michael Young, was "intoxicated" when she arrived in A&E complaining of a headache and crucial scans were not carried out.

The inquest heard Gaia had died of a cerebral edema – a condition which causes the brain to swell.

But the cause of the condition, which worsened rapidly and was not immediately diagnosed, remains unknown.

"I feel in a way robbed of the time to grieve because the UCL has been so uncooperative," she said.

"I hoped [to get answers] from the beginning when I handed in my first submission – an analysis of the medical records and the post-mortem and serious incident report – but the hospital didn't acknowledge it. Complete stonewalling."

She said she is in the "pre litigation stage" of making a claim for medical negligence.

She said she was contacted by a UCLH doctor three weeks ago, who told her there was a "plan to write to the president of The Association of British Neurologists" to get a shortlist prepared from which she could choose an independent medic for a review.

A UCLH spokesperson offered "deepest sympathies" to Gaia's family, and said it is commissioning an external review by an independent neurologist to "explore further the circumstances surrounding Gaia's death".

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She added: "They (UCLH) sent me three dates for a meeting in the week Gaia died, which I thought was extremely insensitive."

She said she does not understand why at the inquest the coroner allowed the hospital to choose its medical witness who "was not a neurologist".

Dorit said she has lodged a complaint with the GMC (General Medical Council).

She said after the vigil: "The focus of our protest is that the hospital doesn't want to investigate. It's shocking. It's a teaching hospital with a major national hospital of neurology next door, part of the same trust.

"Wouldn't they want to know to expand their knowledge? Prevent another death?

"There are so many facets. The simple truth that a beautiful 25-year-old woman, 16 hours after admission, dies of a brain condition and one year after her death, her death is still not explained and the hospital hasn't done anything to find out."

She added: "Because they thought right from the start that Gaia was intoxicated on drugs, which she absolutely wasn't, and they didn't do any kind of care for at least 12 hours, as long as nobody knows what Gaia died of, they can get away with that kind of substandard care."

University College Hospital apologised to the family in February after the inquest found medics may have failed to give Gaia the best chance of survival.

The vigil followed a memorial held for Gaia over the weekend where her CSG friends had gathered to remember her.

"Gaia was so close with her friends from Camden School for Girls. Gaia always had ideas and a sense of fun of where to go and what to do without spending much money.

"Her friends told me 'Gaia was always up for anything' helping them.

"During Covid she helped people who were shielding, she cooked for the homeless people and took it to them, she was incredibly community spirited."

A UCLH spokesperson said: "We understand this continues to be an extremely sad time for Gaia's mother and loved ones, and offer our deepest sympathies.

"While the coroner could not say that different care could have prevented Gaia's death, we do acknowledge some things could have been done better.

"We are therefore commissioning an external review, by an independent neurologist, to explore further the circumstances surrounding Gaia's death.

"This will build on the learning from our internal investigation and the coroner's report.

"We have invited Gaia's mother to meet with us so we can discuss her daughter's care and next steps."

St Pancras Coroners' Court declined to comment.

