

Case Study Brief: (What Happened to Alex?)

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HA645: Quality Improvement and Patient Safety in Healthcare

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November 2022

Introduction to Case Study Analysis

As with his father, Alex James took up running. In the middle of a run one day, he suddenly passed out and spent the next five days in the hospital. As a result of exhaustive testing, he was declared healthy. After a month of recovery, he suddenly collapsed again, went into a coma, and ultimately passed away. What had happened, his father wondered, had caused such concern. Retired NASA toxicologist Dr. John James recounts his journey to patient safety advocacy and how he learned the truth about his son's death (Pearson, n.d.).

Case Study Analysis

Case Title and Date

What Happened to Alex?

Facts

Alex was a lively and inquisitive toddler who went through an extended period of repeatedly asking, "Why, Daddy?" It made me think on my feet and come up with novel explanations, but I knew there would always be another "why" in my son's inquisitive little mind. Alex developed into a vigorous young man who was devoted to his baritone playing. In his senior year of high school, he took up running like I had, eventually

besting me in races and always giving me a warm smile and the words, "Good race, Dad." He enrolled at Baylor University as a computer science major shortly before his eighteenth birthday. His decision to join ROTC at Baylor and eventually serve in the Air Force was inspired by the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Disruptive phone call

Most Important Case Facts

Fact 1

Alex passed out while running. Alex had previously collapsed after a similar event, but he had recovered on his own. This time, he was out for quite some time, and it took three shocks to his heart to get it going again (Pearson., n.d).

Fact 2

Alex remained in a coma for good, and he never woke up. Alex passed just three days after I drove there to visit him. The loss felt by Alex's loved ones, including his mother and I, his younger sister and younger brother, cannot be adequately described. As we grieved over the loss of our eldest son and brother, we were comforted by the prayers of our church family and the love of many friends.

Fact 3

His coma was so severe that he was unresponsive. Despite the late hour, I made the trip to my son's hospital bedside, which was three hours away.

Key Issues

Issues in this section have been identified from the facts; trivial issues have been discarded to allow focus on only those that are key to solving the identified problem (James, n.d.).

Most Relevant Issues

Issue 1

[Portion of text redacted]

Issue 2

Alex had insufficient potassium and three different types of cardiac arrhythmia after his initial fall. In such individuals, potassium replacement was recommended in a guideline from the National Council on Potassium in Clinical Practice two years prior.

Despite my informing his primary cardiologist about his low potassium level, he was never given a potassium supplement. Acquired long QT syndrome, a curable heart rhythm disease for which patients are frequently advised to avoid exercise, had also been missed by his cardiologists. Alex received a 5.5 on a scale where a score of 4 or above indicates a high degree of certainty in the diagnosis.

Issue 3

As I pieced together the records, I saw a communication mistake as well. Alex was not cautioned against running after his initial hospitalization following a second collapse. The only condition of his written release was that he refrain from driving for 24 hours. He didn't understand he shouldn't have started jogging after his groin wounds healed because no one mentioned it during his follow-up visit. This blunder may have had fatal consequences.

Alternative Courses of Action

This section lists courses of action that may solve the problem. These alternatives may include technological, process, structural, policy, or managerial solutions.

Courses of Action

Courses of action are identified, specified, and evaluated.

Alternative 1

Because the technicians hadn't been updated on the machine's updated firmware, Alex's cardiac MRI turned out to be inaccurate.

Alternative 2

Acquired long QT syndrome, a curable heart rhythm disease for which patients are frequently advised to avoid exercise, had also been missed by his cardiologists.

Alternative 3

Verifying Alex James's medical history by reading his paperwork. The athlete must first undergo a medical examination in order to determine whether or not they are fit to participate in the event.

Recommended Course of Action

Researching the individual's medical history is crucial. I also think pre-battle physicals are a good idea. It is important to keep in touch with parents so that they are aware of their child's progress as a competitor.

References

James, J. T. (n.d.). What happened to Alex?

<http://www.ihi.org/education/IHIOpenSchool/resources/Pages/CaseStudies/John-T-James-Case-Study-What-Happened-To-Alex.aspx>

Pearson Education. (n.d.). How to analyze a case study.

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