12/16/06
Gardiner, ME

Dear Mr. Bruce,

I am writing to you as a stranger, I know, but I have followed the tragedy of your son's illness and subsequent death of your wife for many weeks, thru the media. Please accept my deepest sympathy for what you are enduring.

It's not as if I am totally unaware of the mechanics of Riverview. After working there as a nurse for 22 yrs (and loving the work I did with the patients) I was exposed to a new group of administrators, who were chosen to expedite closure of AMHI and to build a small hospital (and hopefully release the state from the Consent Decree).

Therefore, the Recovery Model was introduced, allowing pts to make their own treatment decisions—even when this included med refusal.

[redacted]

Those of us who had worked with brain diseased patients for years, knew that their were times when a patient's decision to opt out of medication therapy could be the result of psychotic thinking, and that decision had to be over ridden by clearer thinking caretakers. Generally, we had seen med compliant patients, whose symptoms would remit BECAUSE of the medication. We all believed the analogy of mental illness being like diabetes—treatable with positive results, IF MED COMPLIANCE OCCURRED. But, young people are often in denial and the meds are far less than perfect, and, sometimes, caused some nasty side effects, so doctors always tried to minimize the dosage against resumption of symptoms. But, between the administrators and advocates, a "Recovery" theory became the rule, encouraging patients to make their own treatment decisions.

Perhaps this is why there is not one permanent staff physician @ Riverview, and "rent-a-docs" provide the in-patient care.

Many of us have left Riverview –after years of hard, but fulfilling work—because it has all become more political than clinical. Anyone who loves the mentally ill, and understands their struggles and the pain, which they and their families endure, have not been able to work in a systems which NO longer focuses on the best interest of the patient.

So, Mr. Bruce, I hope you proceed with your litigation against the state, because your losses didn't happen for reasons other than your family's misfortune to become involved with the mental health system, when politics (now) override sound medical decisions.

With sorrow for your losses,

Maria Champine RNC