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Teenage Jehovah's Witness refuses blood transfusion and dies

A teenage Jehovah's Witness who was crushed by a car refused a blood transfusion before he died.

By Laura Roberts

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Josh McAuley, a Jehovah's Witness who was crushed by a car, refused a blood transfusion before he died. Photo: ENTERPRISE

Joshua McAuley, 15, is understood to have declined the treatment advised by doctors and was not overruled by members of his family.

McAuley was treated at Selly Oak hospital in Birmingham after he was pinned against a wall by a car in a freak accident.

He suffered multiple injuries in the crash which occurred as he was preaching to local people shopping on Saturday in Smethwick, West Mids.

The schoolboy, who attended Shireland Academy and was preparing to sit his GCSEs, was airlifted to hospital after being trapped under the rubble of a food shop.

He suffered serious abdominal and leg injuries, and died at around 5.30pm that evening.

The car driver, a 28-year-old man from Evesham, was arrested and later bailed by police pending further enquiries.

McAuley, who lived with his parents Jerome and Denise McAuley, was described as a popular young man by his friends.

Fellow student Wali Ahmadi, aged 16, said: "Josh was a really good guy and was into his sports, especially basketball. Everyone feels really upset." Shakeeb Hanif, aged 16, said: "He was a kindhearted person who never caused any trouble."

Sixteen-year-old Sohail Khan said: "It's unreal. Joshua was the best person at school, hands down, he was caring, he was kind and he never did anything wrong. He brought something good to the world."

The teenager was a member of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in

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Smethwick.

Margaret Wood, a fellow churchgoer, said: "I've known him since he was a little boy. He was one of the nicest young men you would ever have wanted to meet, well mannered and polite and a credit to his mum.

"He was out doing his Bible work, and was just going into the shop to get some sweets when it happened."

Mike Wood, her husband, added: "What makes it so sad is the age. You're just standing there minding your own business and the next minute your life is gone. It's tragic.

"He left his mum that morning and she never thought he wasn't coming back."

A spokesman from Selly Oak hospital said: "There's not one single policy and not one single law regarding transfusions. There's no automatic right to override parental wishes or that of a minor. It's a very complex area that has to be approached on a case by case basis."

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that passages of the Bible forbid blood transfusions. Members who do accept such treatment can be cast out of the church. Many Jehovah's Witnesses carry a signed and witnessed advance directive card absolutely refusing blood and releasing doctors from any liability arising from this refusal.

Clive Parker, an elder at Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses where Joshua and his family worshipped, said: "I believe he was conscious enough after the accident and he made a stand on the blood issue. He made the choice personally."

From a legal point of view doctors who administer blood in the face of refusal by a patient may be unlawful and could lead to criminal and/or civil proceedings.

There have been cases where doctors have gone to court to get permission to give blood to children against the wishes of parents who are Jehovah's Witnesses.

If doctors consider a minor to be competent they can consent to medical treatment, but their refusal can be overruled by the consent of a person with parental authority or by the court.

If the child is deemed not legally competent, consent will need to be obtained from someone with parental responsibility, unless it is an emergency.

Emergency treatment can be provided without consent to save the life of, or prevent serious deterioration in the health of, a child or young person.



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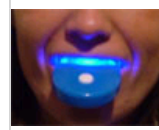


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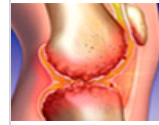
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