

Statement of Tammy Jarbo-Blankenship

My son Michael Blankenship was an intelligent, engaging, fun loving 15 year old boy who deserved to live a full and happy life. He was the heart and soul of my family. His tragic and preventable death has left my family shattered beyond repair.

Michael was autistic. But he was extremely intelligent, sensitive, loving and kind. I believe he was an old soul who enriched the lives of many who were fortunate to know him. Michael's teachers have told me that Michael was so special that he made them better teachers because of how patient and kind he was. Michael made a positive difference for many other people in his short young life.

When Michael died, a large part of me died along with him. I cannot begin to explain to you how much pain and sorrow Michael's death has caused me and my entire family. I loved my son very, very much. More than words can adequately express. I can't tell you how much I miss my baby boy.

I also grieve for my youngest son who is now 12 years old. He was present in our family home when Michael was found dead and then witnessed Michael being carried away in a body bag. Now my youngest child refuses to stay in our home because it reminds him of that tragic day. Michael's death has ripped my whole family apart.

I am grateful that Seattle Children's Hospital has formally admitted to causing my son's death by overprescribing him a lethal dose of narcotic medication. However, I am still very upset that no action has been taken against the dentist who prescribed the medication when the error was so egregious.

Children's Hospital does not fully appreciate the magnitude of the harm caused to me and my family. They also do not fully appreciate and understand how valued and important Michael's life was to his family, friends and to the autistic community. Even though Michael was autistic, his life still had tremendous value and worth. He was loved by so many people.

I decided to pursue legal action against Children's after it became clear to me that the hospital was not taking full responsibility for breaking the law and killing my son. The hospital only decided to come forward publicly and admit wrong after my lawsuit was filed. I want this lawsuit to raise public awareness about medication errors and hopefully save other innocent lives in the process.

The medical error that killed my son Michael was egregious. It was easily preventable. If our medical community implements and follows better safeguards regarding the prescription of dangerous drugs, then no other family will have to suffer the way we have.

I do remain hopeful that this matter can be resolved. Otherwise, I will respect our civil justice system and let it take its course.

Thank you.