

CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus: Hospital crisis stops lifesaving treatment for father and son

Lois Rogers

Sunday April 05 2020,
12.00am,
The Sunday Times

Health



Reuben Wood with his parents. Treatment has been delayed for Reuben and his father
ANDREW HASSON

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Just before the Covid-19 crisis struck, Graham Wood got two terrible pieces of news.

In January, his five-year-old son Reuben was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. In February, Graham was told that his brain cancer tumour, first diagnosed in 2014 and largely removed, had started to grow again.

Graham, 36, who used to run a newsagent's shop before

the cancer struck, and his wife Amber, a florist, from Pevensey, East Sussex, were told that the advance of Reuben's fatal degenerative condition could be slowed down. Most sufferers die in their twenties but some are leading productive lives into their forties with the availability of modern specialist treatment.

His own death sentence could also be deferred, as doctors treating him at the Royal Sussex Hospital in Brighton discovered that he was a perfect candidate for eflornithine. This is a new drug that has been shown to block tumour growth but is available only in clinical trials at two London hospitals.

"In February they asked me which hospital I wanted to go to for the treatment, then I didn't hear anything until an email on March 23 saying that due to the coronavirus situation they were halting recruitment to the trial. [But] my oncologist has assured me that a couple of months won't make a huge difference," he said.

"They are meant to be reassessing it in May but I don't know if that will now happen. I haven't asked how long I've got. There's nothing we can do."

No assessment appointment has yet been offered for Reuben either: "We have been left completely in limbo. By the time Reuben's a teenager he will be in a wheelchair.

"I feel worse for Amber than I do for myself. It's somehow worse to watch someone else going through

something like this than it is to go through it yourself.”

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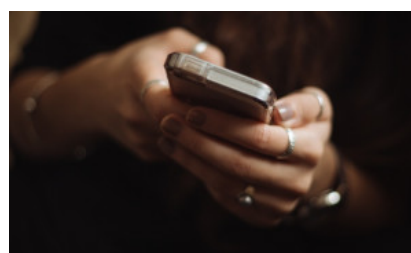
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