



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 30, 2013

“Brain Dead” Brit Escapes Death Sentence of Organ Harvesting Doctors

Four medical specialists declared 17-year-old Steven Thorpe brain dead after he suffered devastating injuries in a 2008 car accident, and prepared to harvest his organs. But Thorpe’s family had second thoughts, refusing to give the okay to end his life. And it’s a good thing because Thorpe woke up from his “irreversible” brain damage and five years later is making, by his own estimation, a “full recovery.”



The U.K.’s [Daily Mail](#) recalled that Thorpe, a British secondary school student, was riding in a Land Rover with two friends in February 2008 when the vehicle hit a horse in the road, killing one of the other young men and severely injuring Thorpe, whom doctors declared brain dead two days after the accident. “The doctors were telling my parents that they wanted to take me off the life support,” Thorpe, now 21, recalled to the *Daily Mail*. “The words they used to my parents were, ‘You need to start thinking about organ donations.’”

But Steven’s parents, John and Janet Thorpe, were convinced that they had seen a flicker of life in their son’s eyes, and instead of giving the hospital permission to proceed with the organ harvesting, they decided to get a second opinion. “They still believed I was there,” the younger Thorpe said. “When they sat around the bed they had the feeling I was there and some words they said to me I reacted to.”

John Thorpe contacted Dr. Julia Piper, “known for her work in traditional and alternative medicines,” reported the *Mail*. Piper in turn asked a neurosurgeon she knew to visit the boy at University Hospital in Coventry. After examining Steven, that doctor determined the teen was not “brain dead,” and while it appeared to be a long shot, he had a small chance of recovering. Thorpe’s doctors agreed to try to bring their patient out of his medically induced coma, and within two weeks he had regained consciousness. Seven weeks later he left the hospital.

While the young man, who is now training to be an accountant, lost the use of his left arm and had to undergo extensive reconstructive surgery to his face, he considers his survival a miracle. “As far as I am concerned, living is a full recovery,” he told reporters. “From how I was to how I am now, I think it’s a miracle. I drive to work every day. I don’t think anything is holding me back.”

He said he is thankful his parents did not give up in the face of pressure from the doctors. “I feel so lucky that my parents wouldn’t take no for an answer,” he said, speculating, “I think if my dad had agreed with them, then I would have been off the life support machine in seconds.” He said that he was troubled by the hospital’s apparent eagerness to take him off life support and harvest his organs. “It’s very worrying to think that more than one specialist had written me off,” he said.

A spokesman for the hospital stood behind the doctors who made the recommendation, insisting in a statement that “the injury to Steven’s brain was extremely critical and several CT scans of the head showed almost irreversible damage. It is extremely rare that a patient with such extensive trauma to the brain should survive. We were delighted to see Steven recover.”



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Recalling the case in which she played a major role, Dr. Julia Piper said that she had a “strong feeling” the doctors were wrong in their evaluation, and “I got someone else to look at him and of course it proved to have been the right thing to have done.” She speculated that cases such as Steven Thorpe’s “may happen more often. We don’t have any figures, but I think it’s important to always ask and if you’re not sure about something to push as hard as you can.”

[LifeNews.com](#) noted that such cases are not uncommon, and cited the recent miracle account of Sam Schmid, an Arizona college student who was declared brain dead back in October after a car accident, and who regained consciousness just hours before doctors were scheduled to remove him from life support and harvest his organs. The pro-life news site recalled that as “hospital officials began palliative care and talked with his parents about organ donation, Schmid began to hold up two fingers on command and started walking with the aid of a walker. Now, his speech has improved and doctors say he will have a complete recovery.”

Pro-life bio-ethicist [Wesley J. Smith](#) has been warning for some time about the tendency among some medical professionals to advocate for quicker decisions that would prematurely end the life of severely injured — and supposedly “brain dead” — individuals. “The point of this reckless advocacy, although they don’t put it this bluntly,” Smith writes, “is that there are thousands of perfectly good organs being used by people who really don’t need them anymore, by which they mean patients with profound cognitive impairments who will remain unconscious or minimally aware for the rest of their lives. Why not harvest such patients, this thinking goes, for the benefit of people who could return to normal lives?”

The obvious problem is that such a policy would violate what is called the “dead donor rule,” a legal as well as moral pact that, heretofore, transplant doctors have honored, by which they promise, writes Smith, that “vital organs would only be harvested from patients who are truly dead.” But, Smith adds, “if the definition of death were loosened to include, say, a diagnosis of persistent vegetative state, more organs could be obtained — and the dead donor rule could still appear to be honored.”

Such a step, of course, would be a deep betrayal by medical officials of the trust of individuals and families they purport to serve. Nonetheless, revealed Smith, such a “killing for organs” proposal is “now being promoted in some of the world’s most prestigious medical, science, and bioethical journals.”

Smith quoted a bioethicist with the National Institutes of Health as opining that in “the longer run, the medical profession and society may, and should, be prepared to accept the reality and justifiability of life terminating acts in medicine in the context of stopping life sustaining treatment and performing vital organ transplantation.”

Armed with such glib and self-assured opinions, secular rationalizers such as the above, wrote Richard John Neuhaus, “guide the unthinkable on its passage through the debatable on its way to becoming the justifiable, until it is finally established as the unexceptionable.”

It is only by the grace of God that Steven Thorpe and Sam Schmid escaped the deadly prescription of such medical “experts.” And only God is aware, along with a few doctors, of the many who did not escape.

A photo of a patient on life support



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