

Weed-Smoking Triggers Suicide, Boy Thought Drug Was Harmless

The mother of a young man whose suicide last year was “triggered” by smoking cannabis has said her son thought the drug was harmless.

Melanie Leahy’s son, Matthew, 20, hanged himself last November while he was an in-patient at a mental health hospital in Essex, England. He had been addicted to cannabis for a number of years.

But crossbench peer Baroness Meacher is calling for a sweeping liberalization of drugs laws.

She says possession of all drugs should be decriminalized, and she claims 77 percent of members of Parliament want a policy reform.

Matthew Leahy is thought to have started smoking cannabis at the age of 14, and from then his mental health gradually deteriorated.

His mother says she now knows from medical notes that Matthew admitted to his general practitioner (GP) that he was smoking cannabis because “he believed it was harmless.”

She says he excelled academically at school but that because of his drug-taking, he gained the equivalent of just two A-levels and was later unable to continue his IT job due to delusions.

She says, “Matthew was in so much distress about these imagined parasites that it was preventing him from sleeping properly.”

She adds, "His GP felt he was hallucinating due to his drug problem and referred Matthew to a consultant psychiatrist."

Eventually, Matthew was admitted to a mental health hospital, where he hanged himself.

Doctors say his suicide was triggered by his cannabis smoking.

In her comments on the *Daily Politics* program, Lady Meacher referred to chief constable Mike Barton, who recently said drug addicts should be "treated and cared for, not criminalized," and that decriminalization would take away the income of dealers.

But Kathy Gyngell of the Centre for Policy Studies criticizes Barton's comments, saying the solution to the problem of drugs crime is not so "seductively simple."

Gyngell says Barton is "at the coalface of a drugs policy regime that is paying a high price for its liberality."