

Former consultant psychiatrist says she was prevented from

'I was raging. I had warned them this girl was high risk'

EVERY seasoned cop has one case that never leaves them. Often it involves a child. It can be the same for doctors too.

For consultant psychiatrist, Dr Maya Sharma, that case involves a 16-year-old who she was not allowed to save.

The case began routinely enough. In March 2021, Dr Sharma was asked by a speech and language therapist to assess a young girl.

Something was off. The therapist could not put their finger on it but something was amiss. So Dr Sharma sat in. The clues were minimal. But they were there.

'My conclusion, having observed them [the clues], was that she was about to enter the early stage of psychosis,' Dr Sharma recalled.

This was a vital intervention. Psychosis itself is toxic to the brain. Any reduction in the duration of untreated psychosis can prevent lasting damage.

Dr Sharma explained to the patient's mother that she should watch her daughter carefully for further symptoms.

'If they started to occur, I would class it as a psychiatric emergency and that she should get to A&E or call us and ask to speak to me and I would see them the same day.'

Two months later the mother, in tears and distraught, picked up the phone for help.

'She was very distressed. Crying. She said she was terrified. Her child was behaving very oddly.'

But the mother was not then put through to Dr Sharma.

That's because by then, Dr Sharma had been placed on administrative leave by superiors alleged to have been bullying her.

With Dr Sharma sitting down the hall, unaware the call had even taken place, the mother was told an

'I went numb. It was like a truck hit me'

urgent appointment letter would be dispatched.

Then, for 36 days, nothing happened.

During that time, Dr Sharma handed in her resignation letter. She just couldn't take it anymore.

'It's beyond human. It's so dehumanising and I had been demonised for too long.'

On the 36th day – the last day of Dr Sharma's employment – the child was found dead.

But no one told Dr Sharma. She learned of the death a few days later. When it came, the inquest ruled the death a suicide.

But to Dr Sharma it was more than that. In her opinion, the teenager's death was 'a systemic homicide' caused by failures in the system, that need not have happened.

For Dr Sharma, this is the case that changed everything.

Weeks later, Dr Sharma was walking by the lake in the picturesque Killarney National Park when she spotted something pink in her peripheral vision.

In the upturned roots of a fallen tree, a shrine had been left to the



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girl Dr Sharma had not been allowed to treat.

There was a poorly printed photo with an RIP date, candles, and a soft, fluffy toy.

'I went numb. It was like a truck hit me,' Dr Sharma recalled.

'I was mad. I was raging. I had warned of this. I had warned the system. I had predicted a serious incident,' she said.

'I had marked this girl as a high risk and they had cancelled my clinics. I was in the building, and yet I was not consulted for my patient.'

In that moment, something in Dr Sharma snapped.

In the clear water nearby, she saw a broken and discarded wagon wheel from one of Killarney's jaunting cars.

'The mix of feelings was overwhelming, and my mind just shut down. I went into the water, and I hauled that over. I don't know what I was doing.'

Turned on its side, by the roots of the tree, the wheel became a table for the shrine.

The next day, Dr Sharma returned to leave a book called 'Noise' at the site of the shrine.

'It makes sense, because the institutions around this child just make noise but she's silent now because the noise killed her.'

And then, surrounded by the majestic peaks of the MacGilly-

cuddy Reeks and the silent depths of the lake, Dr Sharma resolved to turn whistleblower.

It is a decision that has led to her becoming temporarily homeless on the streets of London – but it is not one she will ever regret.

'Absolutely no,' Dr Sharma responds forcefully when asked if she wishes she'd never spoken out.

'No way, I could not have lived with myself.'

DR SHARMA was born Ankur Sharma in 1981 in Calcutta. She has two sisters.

In recent years, she has transitioned to Maya – a process that together with whistleblowing has been a focal point of harassment.

It has also seen Maya become estranged from her family who do not approve.

Her father was an oil executive and the family moved throughout India to follow his assignments.

But Dr Sharma's formative years were spent in the city of Dehradun, the capital of the Indian state of Uttarakhand, near the Himalayan foothills.

'It's where the Himalayas sort of starts. It's beautiful and idyllic. You can see the Himalayas from my house.'

With these origins in mind, it is easy to see why Dr Sharma eventu-

ally settled in Killarney and would like to return there.

According to Dr Sharma, she was a happy and creative child.

'I just wanted to be in a loving profession and a fulfilling one.'

Medical school in India was followed by further training at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and in 2016, Dr Sharma registered with the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom.

In order to also pursue a passion for the study of Renaissance painting in Italy, she divided her time between temporary locum posts and art school.

With its desperate shortage of consultants, locum work in Ireland was easy to come by.

And though the flaws in the Irish system were frustrating – and potentially devastating – Dr Sharma was able to help many.

This is evident from the outpouring of support she has received since RTÉ's Barry Lenihan broke the news of Dr Sharma's homelessness this week.

'I listened to the interview,' one parent of a former patient texted Dr Sharma this week.

'I'm not ashamed to admit it. It made me cry. You sound very tired. I hope you can end up back in Killarney and with a stable life.'

That parent – who once expected to find their child dead at any

moment – is now watching as their once-troubled child is thriving.

'The young person has gone on to become a sort of genius,' Dr Sharma says, with evident satisfaction and pride.

LIFE on the streets of London has been tough for Dr Sharma. She has learned how to survive on next to nothing.

In Cafe Nero on Charing Cross Road, for example, she asks in an embarrassed fashion if she can scan her loyalty card for the points as I pay for coffees.

The free cappuccino those points will provide is the difference between having breakfast the next day or not.

Dinner, when it can be found, comes from a soup kitchen or via charity food vouchers.

'I don't recognise the sensation hunger, not because it's part of a depressive episode or anything. I've just habituated to dinner and a coffee in the morning.'

She has also been viciously assaulted with a broken bottle. In hospital afterwards, doctors removed shards of broken glass from the attack, one of which nearly killed her.

'They told me had it been one centimetre on the other side, my bowel would have burst and I would have died on the spot.'

Yet Dr Sharma does not regret her whistleblowing.

She's just become street-smart and learned to stay away from

saving the life of a patient because of failures in CAMHS



DEFIANT: Dr Maya Sharma in London and, inset, chatting with MoS reporter Michael O'Farrell

'AFTER THE WARNING' By Dr Maya Sharma

There is a moment after the truth is spoken when the world does not shatter — it simply tilts, imperceptibly, just enough for you to lose your footing.

I keep thinking there should have been a threshold, a line of demarcation: before I spoke and after I spoke. But there wasn't. The fall began quietly, like someone blowing ash from the edge of a page.

They talk about homelessness as though it's a location. For me it was a temperature drop, a thinning of the world, a slow erasure of all the rooms in which I used to exist.

The letters arrived in their own time: thin envelopes, heavy consequences. Language sharpened into instruments. Sentences that dismantled my life with the precision of a surgeon, but none of the mercy.

Destitution is not dramatic. It is an ambient hum. A constant narrowing. A diet of uncertainty. A long apprenticeship in disappearing.

Some nights I dream of the children. Not their faces — just the weight of their files in my hands, the quiet knowledge of what was happening, the impossible ache of knowing I could not stay silent.

I did not choose exile. Exile chose me — in procedural steps, in administrative shadows, in the slow, meticulous unravelling of the life I had spent decades building.

There were days I thought I had imagined the harm, that perhaps the truth was a hallucination, a ghost only I could see. But the truth has a pulse. It keeps returning. Even when I cannot.

Sometimes a single human voice cuts through the wreckage. A voice asking, How are you holding on? Not out of duty, but witness. Not to rescue, but to refuse the erasure.

This is not an autopsy. It is a map of the afterlife — the strange, dislocated world that opens beneath your feet when you tell the truth and the ground decides it no longer wants to hold you.

I write these fragments to trace the damage. Not for pity, but for proof. Not for drama, but because survival is sometimes made of broken sentences.

'I got attacked, scapegoated, and everything else for doing something that they would all, in hindsight, agree was the right thing to do.'

The problem, as Dr Sharma sees it, is that systems running the medical profession have 'become sociopathic' and are in panic.

'The priority for institutions is to maintain squeaky clean reputations at all costs, and if that means destroying a doctor's career, or any nefarious action or wrongdoing, it will be done.'

'When systems go in panic, they lose capacity, just as any person who is 10 out of 10 angry loses the capacity for abstract reasoning and rationalising.'

'Systems in panic will act like animals or cavemen fighting an existential threat. I would have been an existential threat from the system's perspective, and I got eaten.'

For years, Dr Sharma took suffering as routine — something part of her felt she deserved. Even the horrific assault she endured felt

'I was at the interface between life and death'

like the universe was judging her.

'I was so fatigued and traumatised... that sometimes I wondered if I was alive or dead... I was sitting right at the interface, between life and death.'

That is now changing. Now a delicate but strengthening defiance is emerging, like a butterfly from a chrysalis.

'I had come to expect punishment, and only in recent months have I come out of that mindset where I don't deserve any punishment for anything.'

'I did the right thing, and I would do it 100 times again and suffer if I have to suffer.'

The London city parks Dr Sharma spends her days in are now resplendent in spring flowers after a long, hard winter.

They are a sort of metaphor for Dr Sharma's own metamorphosis. She too is emerging from a bulb and pushing up through the ground towards the sunlight once more.

Her favourite spot is beneath a majestic London plane tree overlooking the lake in St James's Park.

It is here, seated on roots that have seen kings and queens come and go, where we conduct this interview. If she gets her wish, Dr Sharma won't be here much longer.

Her application to be re-registered with the Irish Medical Council is in train — and comes before an adjudication meeting on Tuesday.

When that comes through, she knows where she wants to be.

'In Killarney, running my private practice, working on an income sliding scale, which I don't know why private practices don't do.'

In psychiatry, the wounded warrior metaphor is commonly used to describe someone who instead of being broken by past trauma, becomes driven by it.

It would be an apt way to think of Dr Maya Sharma.

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institutions like the HSE. Dr Sharma said 'my forehead is tattooed with risk of reputational damage to organisations'.

And she added: 'I'm done with institutions and organisations and institutional abuse.'

'I am angry. But living for a bit of time below rock bottom, there is a

place. I've been there. It teaches you a lot of things, and in a strange kind of way, it calms you down... it's a good hiding place, in a way, just to hide and not be seen.'

Looking back, Dr Sharma can now see she her whistleblowing represented a threat to a system that will always circle the wagons

to protect itself. 'I was the bad apple, and everything bad was projected onto me.'

'They couldn't identify their projections as being theirs. They

couldn't own the bad parts of them — the parts that wanted to say, "we knew this" because what I exposed was known for the past four years before me.'