

On July 29, 2013 I got a frantic call from our 18 year-old son who was in the ER telling me he had just overdosed! I was numb with disbelief, heartsick and devastated. I rushed to the ER where we both cried and life was now different. He was admitted to the hospital for a few days. After his discharge he refused the recommended inpatient rehab and agreed to three outpatient sessions per week for the month before he was scheduled to go to college out of town. He assured us this was going to be put behind him and he wanted to move forward with his life and education. We were naïve and believed the lies the disease of addiction tells. We desperately wanted to believe him and hoped for the best. I told him that we would tell no one of this incident but if he used again, I would speak out. He seemed to be doing ok his first year away at school but during his second year of school, he started to fail some classes.

While my son was home from school for the summer after his second year, I again got a frantic phone call. This time we were at a baseball game. It was August 18, 2015 and it was my niece calling. She found her cousin, my son, on his knees, lips blue on our kitchen floor. She called 911. He had "died" again from a heroin overdose but, by the grace of God, was revived for a second time with Narcan. As we arrived to the chaos of police and paramedics in our home our son was angry and did not want to go to the hospital. I now know that is typical behavior for someone revived with Narcan. They took him in the ambulance and we followed. We sat in the waiting room at the hospital, not allowed to go back to talk to him or the doctors. After 20 minutes or so, our son came walking out angry and refusing to be admitted and demanding to leave. Not knowing what to do, we took him home. I stayed up most of the night talking to and walking with my son to make sure he wouldn't die that night. I started making phone calls trying to

figure out a plan to help save my son. A friend who heard about our son called the next day and offered to set up an appointment with a drug and alcohol counselor.

A few days later we took our son to the counselor who said he would not even work with him until our son completed inpatient rehab since he considered his life at such risk that it would be too much of a liability. The counselor recommended Greenbriar near Pittsburgh saying it was the best. We trusted him since he had more than 30 years experience in the field. We knew we should do as he recommended. I called my son's school requesting a medical leave for him and got him a bed at Greenbriar for the following Monday. My son fought against not returning to school and forced rehab but we left him little choice.

What small comfort we had in at least knowing we had a plan in place for our son to get into rehab for 28 days quickly dissolved. Greenbriar informed us that our insurance (Optum) would not cover our son's stay there. He did not meet criteria! I couldn't believe it!! He had overdosed 2 times and they were telling us he didn't meet criteria??!!! Of course my son was aware of this insurance problem and started demanding we leave since he didn't want to be there anyway! We were reeling and it felt like the insurance had pulled the rug out from us again. It was a nightmare! I felt physically ill and faint. I told them we could not leave, we had no other plan! Greenbriar had to request a review with the insurance. We waited for several hours agonizing over what might come next. We were informed that the insurance would cover some of the rehab but we would have to pay for our son's room and board.

Greenbriar had to keep calling Optum insurance every 3-4 days to beg for more time for our son to stay at rehab. We truly didn't know when the insurance would say they would pay no more. It ended up that the insurance would only pay for his 21 day stay instead of the recommended minimum of 28 days. I can not express to you how much our anxiety was compounded at this especially difficult and frightening time by having to beg for inpatient rehab coverage for our son. We didn't know from day to day whether or not there would be approval. The fight for insurance on top of everything our family had to deal with felt, at times, almost unbearable. When we desperately needed insurance the most, it felt like they were delivering another kick to the gut!

Our family's fight against the disease of addiction like so many other families continues. We hope for help with insurance to cover inpatient rehab without a fight. We hope for help in covering the cost of medications such as vivitrol injections. We hope for the necessary counseling that families need to be accessible and covered by insurance. We are in a battle against addiction that steals so much from families. We don't need to fight insurance companies too!