

## **A case study in adolescent's schizophrenia**

Matt, a 15 years, 6 month old boy, was referred simultaneously by his General Practitioner and the crisis intervention team. He had been found in a park wandering and had been reported to the police by onlookers. When the police arrived on the scene and questioned him, he had been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for how he was not at school or what he was doing in the park. The police had searched him and found that he had a knife and a pair of scissors with him. He had been very anxious and agitated when the police brought him home. His behaviour had been odd at home. For example, he talked loudly in his room and had been shouting out. He had been restless at nights and been walking around in his room. One night, he had gone to the kitchen to prepare some food but left the cooker unattended. He had been in another room when the smoke alarm went on. Matt claimed that he had not used the cooker.

His parents had had to go to the funeral for two days. During this period, he burst into his sister's room saying, 'you know what is going on.' His sister Melanie (18 years) had telephoned her parents to say that Mat had been acting strange. On their return, the parents made an appointment to see their GP. In the meantime, Matt wandered off from home and refused to come back. His mother and sister followed him down the street as far as they could. When they lost sign of him, they came back home and informed the police. He was found the same day sitting in the park, talking and signing to himself. With the help of the police, his parents contacted the Mental Health Crisis Team. He was seen at home the next day.

When Matt and his family were seen at home, his parents reported that his attendance at school had been erratic over the past 6 months. They felt that he was truanting and school was not taking any action. On a number of occasions, he had set out to go to school but not attended and had been roaming around the streets. They were not sure what he was doing or how he spent the time. The school had reported to the parents that he was missing from school on a number of occasions. His mother had visited school and had been told that his schoolwork had been deteriorating. On questioning Matt, he had not been able to give a satisfactory explanation to his parents for his absence from school and had said that he had been away from school and had been hanging around with his friends. His mother had spoken to his friends but they had said that they had no knowledge of his whereabouts. The parents had taken up the matter with Matt and wanted him to stop truanting and to attend school regularly.

During this period, they had noticed a change in his character. They found him to be restless and lacking in concentration. For example, Matt, who was a keen footballer, had not been able to sit through and watch a football match on television to the end. He had been a keen supporter on Manchester United and while the entire family had been watching an important football match in which Manchester United was playing a rival team, Matt had left the room soon after the match began and been wandering around the house. The parents considered this highly unusual for Matt because of his keen interest in football. They also noticed that he was in and out of the drawing room when he was at home but he did nothing productive. At nights, he could be heard pacing in his room, singing, or talking aloud. At this time, the parent's main concern was about loss of schoolwork.

They felt that he was becoming a troublesome teenager, refusing to do as he was told and truanting from school. However, after the involvement of the police, they had started wondering about the possibility of something being wrong with him and wanted to the GP to check him out.

When he was brought back home by the police, he had claimed that everyone appeared different and that he himself had become different. He had been saying that he had a camera in his head and whatever he saw other people could see. By the time he was scheduled for a mental health examination, he had been not attending school for 4 weeks. The parents were sure that he was not taking any drugs. He had told his sister Melanie that she knew what he was thinking about and had accused her for being an actress. He had said 'you are not real, you are acting like Melanie.' He had been repeatedly saying, 'This is not real, it is a dream and I am going to wake up.' The parents felt that sometimes they could not understand his conversation. For example, he had been saying, 'why are you asking me, you know what I am thinking, you know my thoughts, it is not fair.' They felt he was confused and said things that he did not mean.

**Personal and family history:** Matt was adopted by the Murray family when he was 6 months of age. In his family of origin there had been seven children and all of them had been removed from his mother because of neglect and placed with various carers by social services. The mother was said to suffer from a psychotic illness, probably schizophrenia. He and his older brother, now in his 20s, were adopted by the Murry family, who had two girls of their own. At the time of examination, his older brother was in Bringford Prison, having been convicted of theft and grievous bodily harm. His adopted father was a credit collector and Mrs Murry was a full-time housewife. As far as the family could tell, Matt's development was normal and there had been no particular setbacks. He had developed epilepsy at the age of eight and had been on medication until the age of 13 years. The medication had been gradually withdrawn and he had been free of fits since. There was no other medical history of note. Matt was described as an average student at school. He did not particularly like school but was interested in football and cricket and played for the school football team. His family described him as a well-behaved boy who had not caused them any problems in the past. He had no close friends but the family did not consider this a major problem. He had a number of acquaintances through his sporting activities but did not socialise with them outside school. He had turned down all invitations to join them in birthday parties or other activities.