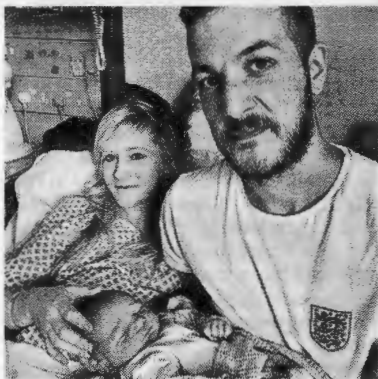


Devastated parents consider court appeal to keep their son alive

Kat Lay Health Correspondent

The parents of a severely brain-damaged baby are considering whether to appeal against a judge's ruling that his life support should be removed.

Charlie Gard, who is eight months old and unable to breathe unaided, will remain on life support at Great Ormond Street Hospital until any appeal against the High Court ruling. His parents, Chris Gard and Connie Yates,



Connie Yates and Chris Gard want to seek treatment for Charlie in the US

had been pleading for the chance to take him to the US for a trial treatment.

Laura Hobe-Hamsher, the couple's solicitor, said that they were considering the options. She added that they were devastated by the decision and struggling to understand why the judge had not "at least given Charlie the chance of treatment".

Mr Justice Francis told the High Court that he had made his judgment with the "heaviest of hearts" but with the "complete conviction" that it was in Charlie's best interests.

Great Ormond Street could "lawfully

withdraw all treatment save for palliative care to permit Charlie to die with dignity", he said.

Charlie was born with a form of mitochondrial disease, a rare condition that causes progressive muscle weakness and brain damage. Doctors said that he should move to a palliative care regime but were opposed by his parents, from Bedford, west London. There was a scream of "no" in the court as the decision was announced by the judge, who had analysed evidence over three days and visited the child in hospital.

Mr Justice Francis paid tribute to the parents' devotion. He said: "I want to thank the team of experts and carers at Great Ormond Street for the extraordinary care that they have provided.

"Most importantly of all, I want to thank Charlie's parents for their brave and dignified campaign on his behalf, but more than anything to pay tribute to their absolute dedication to their wonderful boy."

Charlie's parents launched an appeal on the GoFundMe website two months ago to fund treatment with nucleoside therapy. They reached their £1.2 million target on Sunday.

The therapy has never been used to treat Charlie's particular type of mitochondrial disease and experts told the judge that it would not be able to reverse structural brain damage.

A spokesman for Great Ormond Street Hospital trust said: "We carefully considered the request for a therapy that had not been used to treat his condition. This included seeking multiple external opinions as to whether this therapy could improve Charlie's chance of survival or quality of life. The consensus was that it would not.

"Our focus now is to work with Charlie's family to plan for the next stages in Charlie's care."

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