

The Patriot Ledger

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Dad who strangled son to death awaits Clancy verdict | Exclusive



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The Patriot Ledger is the South Shore, Massachusetts regional newspaper, which includes Duxbury and Plymouth.

- David Carmichael, who killed his son in 2004 during a psychotic break he attributes to an antidepressant, attended Lindsay Clancy's trial for support.
- Carmichael was found not criminally responsible in Canada, a verdict Clancy's defense is also seeking from the jury.
- Since his release from a psychiatric hospital, Carmichael has become an advocate, raising awareness about the potential dangers of SSRI medications.
- He argues that Clancy, like him, could appear functional while experiencing a pharmaceutically induced delusion.

PLYMOUTH – [David Carmichael](#) killed his 11-year-old son.

He was one of dozens who packed the Plymouth courtroom for the opening of [Lindsay Clancy's murder trial](#) in late July. He flew 2,600 miles from his home in British Columbia to be there. His connection to the case is as unusual as it is tragic.

"I'm one of the few people who has a first-hand understanding of how Lindsay is feeling," he told The Patriot Ledger on July 31, after the first week of testimony.

"In a really sad way, it's peer support."

Twenty-two years earlier to the day of this interview, on July 31, 2004, Carmichael checked into a London, Ontario, hotel room with his 11-year-old son, Ian. He strangled the boy to death on the bed, then calmly watched television until morning, when he called the police on himself.

A year before, Carmichael was prescribed Paxil, an antidepressant and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, [a class of pharmaceuticals that has loomed large in the Clancy case.](#)

Carmichael says the medication caused a chemical imbalance in his brain and ultimately a psychotic break. He believed Ian had debilitating brain damage, such that his life wasn't worth living. In reality, his son had mild epilepsy but was otherwise thriving.



Unlike Clancy, Carmichael was not put on trial by Canadian government

Like Clancy, Carmichael was charged with first-degree murder. But a year later, in September 2005, the Canadian government dropped the charge, agreeing that Carmichael acted under a pharmaceutically induced delusion, and so was not [criminally responsible](#).

Clancy's defense seeks the same finding. But it will have to come from the jury, not the state.

Plymouth District Attorney Timothy Cruz charged Clancy with three counts of first-degree murder. The prosecution has argued that Clancy carefully planned the killings of Cora, 5, Dawson, 3, and Callan, 8 months, choosing to take them with her in an attempted murder-suicide.

Carmichael spent four years in a secure psychiatric hospital before his discharge. Clancy, similarly, has spent the last three years in a state forensic psychiatric hospital in Tewksbury.



How Carmichael found purpose in life, and his trips to the South Shore

Since his discharge, Carmichael has found purpose in life, reconnecting with his wife and daughter and traveling the world speaking about SSRI medications and preventable suicides and homicides.

His trip to Plymouth in late July was part of his mission to raise public awareness. It wasn't his first visit to the South Shore. In June and October 2023, he traveled to Duxbury. On his second visit, he gave a presentation on SSRIs at the small seaside town's public library.

Presentation - Duxbury, Massachusetts

How SSRI Antidepressants Cause Suicide, Violence and Homicide

Thursday October 12, 2023 - 6:30 to 7:30pm
Duxbury Free Library, 77 Alden Street

There is no cost to attend the event, and registration will not be required

This event is not sponsored by Duxbury Free Library



David Carmichael will be delivering the presentation. In July 2004, shortly after starting the SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressant Paxil, David had a psychotic episode and took the life of his 11-year-old son, Ian, in London, Canada. He was then charged with first-degree murder, judged not criminally responsible (insane) in October 2005, and institutionalized in a mental health centre (forensic psychiatric hospital). David was conditionally discharged in December 2007, which allowed him to live with his wife and daughter again. He received an absolute discharge from the Ontario Review Board in December 2009, and has been off psychiatric drugs since September 2010.

During the presentation, David will be providing insight into his planned, organized and calm homicidal psychotic behaviour, and talking about some similarities between his family tragedy and the Lindsay Clancy family tragedy on January 24, 2023 in Duxbury, which he described in the May 6, 2023 Mad in America (madinamerica.com) blog post "SSRIs, Lindsay Clancy, and Me." Lindsay took the lives of her three young children and then attempted suicide after being prescribed 13 drugs over the previous four months, including the SSRIs Prozac and Zoloft.

**For more information about the event, contact
David Carmichael at david@knowyourdrugs.org**

During the first visit in June, Carmichael stopped at the Clancy home in Duxbury and dropped off an informational packet on the porch, he said. It rained that night, so Carmichael returned the next day to check on the package.

"I knocked on the door and (Patrick) opened it," Carmichael said. "I saw that he opened my package. He just looked at me with tears in his eyes. Patrick was at the house for the first time since everything happened, packing up the kids' stuff."

When Carmichael returned in October 2023, about 30 people attended his talk at the Duxbury library. Attendants didn't register their names, but Carmichael said local first responders and a few of Lindsay Clancy's former colleagues at Brigham and Women's labor and delivery unit attended.

Patrick Clancy's father, Christopher Clancy, also attended, Carmichael said.

"I knew Patrick had forgiven (Lindsay)," Carmichael said. "I hoped to help bring them closer together."



My own right hand.' Carmichael's response to the opening days of the Clancy trial

The opening days of the Clancy trial reawakened Carmichael's most painful memories, he said.

"I remember every detail," he said of the night he killed Ian. "My own right hand – I'm looking at it right now. It's frightening."

After attending the opening arguments and two days of testimony, Carmichael highlighted the prosecution's depiction of Clancy as rational and functional on the day she killed her children.

"(Prosecutor Jennifer Sprague) is saying you can't be psychotic and behave the way she did," Carmichael said. "She's wrong."

The details of Carmichael's case

Comparing his case to Clancy's, Carmichael recalled his own behavior before he killed his son.

"This entire week, I was functioning at a higher intellectual level than normal," he said, outlining several deliberate, rational steps he took in service of his overarching delusion – that he was performing an act of mercy.

At the hotel room, Carmichael served Ian his favorite meal, he said. They watched Ian's favorite movie. Then he dosed Ian's orange juice with over-the-counter sleeping medication. Instead of putting his son to sleep, it caused Ian to hallucinate.

"He was bouncing around the room for three hours," Carmichael said. "I put him on his back, and I strangled him until he was dead."

Carmichael put Ian in the middle of the bed and crossed his arms, thinking he was "in a better place now," he said.

Carmichael anxiously awaits the verdict

Carmichael insists that if Lindsay Clancy "never took that first pill of Zoloft," her three young children would still be alive.

Like Paxil, Zoloft is an SSRI antidepressant. During Clancy's trial, medical experts have testified that SSRIs can pose dangers to patients suffering from bipolar disorder, causing more rapid alternations between depressive and manic episodes, while increasing the intensity of the latter.

"I'll definitely be watching the verdict of this case," Carmichael said. "I'll be anxious."

That verdict could be a watershed moment in American mental healthcare, Carmichael said. An acquittal will concentrate public attention on overmedication, mixing medications and the dangers of having multiple providers with no case manager to coordinate care, he said.

As for Lindsay Clancy, Carmichael said a guilty verdict would "almost certainly prevent her from rebuilding any type of purposeful life."

If Clancy is found not guilty by lack of criminal responsibility, Carmichael says that she could "speak out publicly to help prevent future medication induced tragedies," as he has done.

Peter Blandino covers Quincy government, politics and courts. Based in Quincy, he has written on social issues, public finance, development and more since joining The Patriot Ledger in 2022. Reach Peter Blandino at pblandino@patriotledger.com.