ANGUISH ON CAMPUS

A talented U-M student kills herself, and her mother wonders if universities are able to handle mental health crises

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On a January afternoon while most students at the University of Michigan studied, socialized or attended class, Candy Wei, an sophomore art and design major from Durham, N.C., sat in her dorm room alone — contemplating suicide.

She lay on her side and curled into the fetal position on the floor in Mosher-Jordan Hall before pulling a plastic bag over her head and face. She placed a rope around the bag and clasped it around her neck. Minutes later, she suffocated.

For years she had lived with schizoaffective disorder — a combination of schizophrenia and a mood disorder characterized by hallucinations, a lost sense of reality and alternating feelings of euphoria and depression. Candy, 20, an outstanding student who aspired to be an art director for a national magazine, was first diagnosed with the illness at age 15 and responded to treatment to become a top student. She relapsed in November and returned home to North Carolina. After treatment, she returned to U-M and two months later, on Jan. 15, she killed herself.

In the wake of her death, Wei's mother, Jing Wang, is questioning whether colleges are adequately serving clinically depressed and other mentally ill students who need help.

Wang, a professor of Chinese cultural studies at Duke University in Durham, N.C., was outraged she had to play what she saw as a frustrating game of cat and mouse with U-M counselors.

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More students need help

WHERE TO FIND HELP

- Ingham Community Mental Health: 517-485-4000, 24 hours
- Listening Ear: Brighton, Chelsea, and Eaton 877-213-1779 24 hours
- Macomb County Crisis Center: 810-468-7878, 24 hours
- Mason-Macomb Peer-to-Peer: 810-766-1989, ext. 10
- Michigan State Help: 888-723-4732, 24 hours
- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness): 908-295-4732, 24 hours
- Oakland County Mental Health Hotline: 248-843-7947, 24 hours
- Oakland County Community Mental Health Emergency Service: 248-699-4024, 24 hours
- Online resources: teenhotline.org, tealight.org, and nationalhotmeline.org

Students and parents may not know where to turn when their children or loved ones are experiencing mental health issues. Many support groups and counseling services are available, but it can be challenging to find the right one.

Recent studies have shown that mental health issues among young people are on the rise. In 2020, 40% of high school seniors reported feeling anxious, and 35% reported feeling depressed. These numbers have continued to rise in recent years, with many students and parents feeling overwhelmed and unsure of how to help.

One reason for the increase in mental health issues among young people is the growing use of social media. Social media can serve as a support system for those struggling with mental health issues, but it can also be a source of pressure and comparison. Students may feel like they need to present a perfect image of themselves, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.

Another factor is the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health, with many students experiencing anxiety, depression, and isolation. The pandemic has also disrupted many students' routines, making it challenging to maintain healthy habits and social connections.

With the increasing need for mental health support, it's essential to know where to turn for help. Here are some resources available to students and their families:

1. **Ingham Community Mental Health**: Provides 24/7 support and resources for mental health issues. Contact them at 517-485-4000.
2. **Listening Ear**: A confidential phone service available in Brighton, Chelsea, and Eaton. Contact them at 877-213-1779.
3. **Macomb County Crisis Center**: Offers 24/7 support for mental health issues. Contact them at 810-468-7878.
4. **Mason-Macomb Peer-to-Peer**: Provides support and resources for mental health issues. Contact them at 810-766-1989, ext. 10.
5. **Michigan State Help**: Offers 24/7 support for mental health issues. Contact them at 888-723-4732.
6. **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)**: Provides information and resources for mental health issues. Contact them at 908-295-4732.
7. **Oakland County Mental Health Hotline**: Provides 24/7 support for mental health issues. Contact them at 248-699-4024.
8. **Oakland County Community Mental Health Emergency Service**: Provides support and resources for mental health emergencies. Contact them at 248-699-4024.
9. **Online resources**: Several online resources are available, including teenhotline.org, tealight.org, and nationalhotmeline.org.

These resources can provide immediate support and guidance during a mental health crisis. However, it's also important to seek ongoing support and treatment from a mental health professional. Mental health professionals can help individuals develop coping strategies and provide support for managing mental health issues.

It's essential to remember that seeking help for mental health issues is a sign of strength, not weakness. By taking the first step and reaching out for support, individuals can take control of their mental health and live a healthier, happier life.

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- **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)**: 908-295-4732
- **Oakland County Community Mental Health Emergency Service**: 248-699-4024
- **Online resources**: teenhotline.org, tealight.org, and nationalhotmeline.org

Contact or visit these websites for more information and to access support services.