# Young woman’s life cut short after cancer misdiagnosed as sciatica



Kate Drummond, a 25-year-old woman from Devon described by her sister as “fit and healthy,” tragically passed away after a cancer diagnosis was initially missed and mistaken for sciatica. The family's story highlights the challenges of recognising rare cancers that present with common symptoms.

Kate first experienced severe back pain in 2020, which she attributed to poor posture or overtraining following changes in her exercise routine. After consulting her GP, she was prescribed painkillers, but her condition worsened when the pain spread to her hip, accompanied by warmth and slight swelling. In May 2021, Kate sought emergency care at a local hospital in Devon, where blood tests and an X-ray led doctors to diagnose her with probable sciatica—a nerve condition causing pain from irritation or compression of the sciatic nerve. According to her sister Kelly Drummond, medics noted that Kate was one of the youngest patients they had seen with sciatica.

As her pain intensified and her mobility declined, Kate decided to privately undergo an MRI scan after a spinal physiotherapist expressed concern about her symptoms. On 7 July 2021, the scan revealed a “grapefruit-sized” tumour in her pelvic region, along with numerous deposits on her spine. A biopsy conducted at Birmingham Hospital confirmed the diagnosis of Ewing sarcoma, a rare cancer affecting bones or soft tissue, on 3 August 2021.

Within weeks, the cancer spread aggressively to multiple organs, including her lungs, liver, skull, jaw, and other bones. Kelly described the diagnosis as life-altering for the whole family, saying: “I felt shock and disbelief, but also a bit of guilt, as well as you think ‘could I have done more to push her to seek help sooner?’ It all felt really unreal, and it shouldn’t happen to someone so young, especially someone so fit and healthy.”

Kate underwent emergency radiotherapy and chemotherapy over several months, during which she showed signs of improvement. Kelly praised her sister’s strength and positivity, stating: “She remained so strong and so positive the whole time, it was beyond us and we will never understand it.” However, from January 2022, Kate’s health rapidly deteriorated as her liver and kidneys began to fail due to the disease. Her condition declined swiftly, leading to her passing on 17 March 2022.

Kelly revealed that Kate was never given a terminal prognosis until the final weeks, underscoring how suddenly the situation worsened. Reflecting on her sister’s character, Kelly shared: “Kate was the most kind and considerate person, and people were just generally drawn to her; she was really warm. She had really good wit, and she was just hilarious – she had this amazingly infectious laugh. We all say her laugh is what we miss most about her.”

In sharing Kate’s story for the first time, Kelly aims to encourage others to “listen to your body” and “advocate for yourself” in seeking medical advice. She believes earlier diagnosis might have changed the outcome, pointing out that the tumour was sizeable by the time it was found, and doctors suggested Kate’s cancer may have been developing for up to two years. She commented: “What started as some lower back pain turned into cancer within a matter of days, which then turned into multiple cancerous tumours in almost every part of her body – the rapid progression was shocking. Kate’s story shows just how unpredictable cancer is, and clearly, early diagnosis has been shown time and time again to save lives.”

The Drummond family continue to honour Kate’s memory by embracing the values she lived by, including living in the moment and cherishing laughter. April marks Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Awareness Month for the Bone Cancer Research Trust, the UK’s leading primary bone cancer charity, which aims to raise awareness of conditions like Ewing sarcoma.

The Mirror is reporting on this poignant account to highlight the complexities of cancer diagnosis in young adults and the potentially fatal consequences of misdiagnosis.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/health-and-families/ewing-sarcoma-bone-cancer-symptoms-back-pain-sciatica-b2736295.html> - This article corroborates the timeline of Katie Drummond’s symptoms starting from severe back pain in 2020, her misdiagnosis with probable sciatica at a hospital in Devon in May 2021, the discovery of a grapefruit-sized tumour in her pelvic region via MRI in July 2021, and the aggressive spread of her cancer leading to her death in March 2022. It also confirms the sister’s comments on Kate being one of the youngest patients diagnosed with sciatica and the family's reflections on early diagnosis and awareness month in April.
* <https://www.timesnownews.com/health/young-woman-dies-after-lower-back-pain-due-to-bone-cancer-was-misdiagnosed-as-sciatica-what-is-ewing-sarcoma-article-151461403> - This source supports the details that Kate Drummond was a young, fit woman whose persistent back pain was initially misdiagnosed as sciatica and later revealed as Ewing sarcoma affecting her pelvic region and spine. It also confirms the rapid deterioration with cancer spreading to other organs and highlights the rarity and complexity of such cancers in young adults.
* <https://www.bonesarcoma.org.uk/ewing-sarcoma/> - The Bone Cancer Research Trust website provides comprehensive information about Ewing sarcoma, including its rarity, typical presentation as bone or soft tissue tumors, symptoms such as persistent pain often confused with common conditions like sciatica, and the importance of early diagnosis—mirroring Kate Drummond’s experience.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sciatica/> - This NHS page explains sciatica as pain caused by irritation or compression of the sciatic nerve, typically presenting as lower back pain radiating down the leg, which aligns with the doctors’ initial diagnosis of Kate’s symptoms in the Devon hospital and the difficulty distinguishing it from serious conditions like cancer.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-61725988> - This BBC News report discusses cases where cancer has been misdiagnosed as musculoskeletal issues such as sciatica, highlighting the challenges in diagnosing rare cancers early and the consequences of delayed diagnosis, which reflect the themes in Kate Drummond’s family’s story.