

the short life and death of **my little brother** (6) breaking the news

My parents _____ the number of times I began a sentence with "When Guy gets better..." Yet, the seriousness of the situation had registered. _____, I apparently turned to my mother and said quietly: "I wouldn't like to be like Brian [a school friend] because he's got no brother." Two days after breaking the news to me about the operation, my parents learned for the first time what had gone wrong. Guy's condition was the result of a mistake made by two anaesthetists who _____ the ports of the inlet and outlet tubes on the ventilator. As a result Guy was breathing room air when he should have been receiving additional oxygen after the operation.

The mistake should have been _____ before or after the operation. After it, when transferred to another machine to see what had _____, Guy went a healthy pink instead of blue. _____, he became blue again when returned to the original ventilator. Although the _____ was a complete success, Guy was now in a coma, very ill and probably brain-damaged.

After countless hospital visits over two weeks and many debates between my parents _____ it was better for Guy to live severely handicapped or to die, my brother's condition deteriorated overnight on October 2-3. My father, who had always wanted Guy to live _____ any mental or physical handicaps he might now have, drove alone at speed to the hospital when he heard the news. The night sister asked him to wait in her office, but after 15 minutes it was the houseman who walked into her office. "Mr Alderson, Guy has just died."

My father cried a little, _____ his thoughts and rang my mother with the news. I have never been able to remember how my mother _____ of Guy's death to me, but _____ I said only one word: "No."

apparently » at one point » broke the news » collected » gone wrong » had confused » however » lost count of » over whether » picked up » regardless of » surgery itself