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Adrian Sudbury

British Journalist Kept a Blog About His Battle Against Cancer

By Jennifer Quinn The Associated Press

LONDON — Adrian Sudbury, a young British journalist who blogged about his fight with cancer and campaigned for more bone marrow donations, died in his sleep Wednesday, his family said. He was 27.

“Baldy’s Blog” was Sudbury’s life — and death — laid bare, documenting sad milestones such as leaving his own apartment and returning to his parents, the breakup of his longtime relationship, and his realization that his disease was terminal. Earlier this month, Sudbury said goodbye to dozens of friends, fighting off debilitating fatigue to see more than 30 people, one at a time.

“I was so proud of myself because now everyone has had the opportunity to say goodbye properly,” Sudbury wrote. “I feel like I have said everything, too, and if I died tomorrow, it would be sad, but there would be no regrets.”

His death was announced on the blog and in the Huddersfield Examiner, the newspaper he worked for as an online journalist when he fell ill in November 2006.

Sudbury started to blog after he was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. He wrote that he was “determined to get over this disease and reclaim my normal life as quickly as possible.”

And while he wasn’t really sure about the whole idea of blogging, Sudbury hoped it would help people understand what leukemia is and how it’s treated.

“I have a confession to make. With a few exceptions I generally loathe blogs. Who’s really interested in a pet cat, someone buying new shoes or top tips on how to plant potatoes?” Sudbury wrote. “I just hope my blogs don’t fall into the unacceptable category of really bloody boring.”

“Baldy’s Blog” would earn Sudbury the 2007 Weblog Award for best health blog and the Guild of Health Writers Award for best online work. He was named multimedia journalist of the year by Press Gazette, Britain’s journalism industry newspaper.

After chemotherapy, Sudbury underwent a bone marrow transplant and credited it with helping to extend his life. But he also acknowledged how awful parts of his treatment were. In particular, he struggled with a common after effect of transplantation in which the transplanted cells turn on patients and attack their skin and organs.

“My skin is flaking and sore,” he wrote in one heartbreaking post in which he disclosed that he and his fiancée, Poppy, were splitting up. “I feel revolting.

“No one is going to marry me now.”

When his leukemia returned — along with another form of the disease, chronic myeloid leukemia — Sudbury made the choice to stop treatment and spend the time he had remaining with his family and

friends.

“Put simply, I’ve had enough,” he wrote. “I’ve been preparing for this eventuality now for the best part of 18 months. I’ve led a decent life, seen a lot of the world and been in a job I’ve enjoyed. As for dying — how can anyone be scared of something that is going to happen to every single one of us?”

But along with the raw honesty, Sudbury peppered his pages with sharp turns of phrase and wryly observed vignettes. There was the lunch at a top London restaurant, courtesy of his “Big Grandma,” and a shopping trip with his sister where they were on the hunt for “killer shoes, perfume, and pizza.”

During his final months, Sudbury continued both his blog and his campaign, visiting the prime minister’s residence at Downing Street to submit a petition that had more than 11,000 signatures. He wanted Britain to educate 17- and 18-year-olds about why it’s important to donate blood and bone marrow, and how it can be done.

“I firmly believe that if our young adults are given all the facts about these important issues many more will go on to become donors themselves,” he said.