

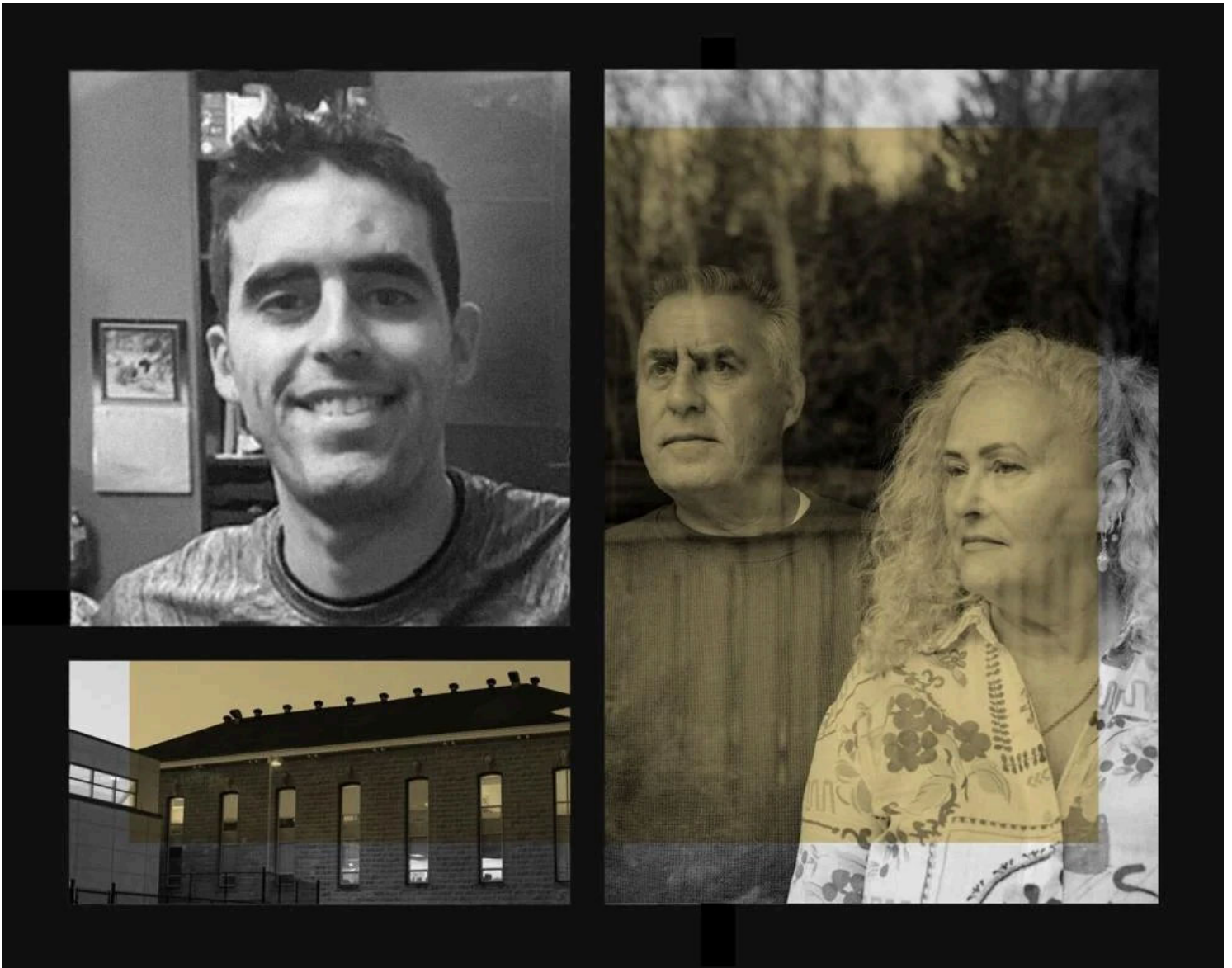
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FOR SUBSCRIBERS 20 YEARS IN ISOLATION: PART 4

Their son has been 'caged' in this Ontario psychiatric hospital for nearly five years. Why public 'shock and horror' may mean new hope

Andrew Azevedo's case may have new hope amid Star investigation into the use of long-term seclusion at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care.

April 28, 2026   



Susan Kao/Toronto Star illustration using photos from Sophie Bouquillon and Arlyn McAorey

By Jacques Gallant Courts and Justice Reporter

This is Part 4 of 20 Years in Isolation, a four-part investigation into the use of psychiatric seclusion at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. In Part 1, the Star told [the story of Camelott Hamblett](#), who may be the person who has spent the most time in psychiatric seclusion in any Ontario hospital. In Part 2, we offered a deeper dive into [the "abusive" use of seclusion at Waypoint](#). And in Part 3, the Star looked at whether the Ontario Review Board [is failing to help get patients out of long-term seclusion](#).

Andrew Azevedo was on the road to being discharged from hospital when he allegedly assaulted a psychiatrist.

Dr. Craig Hudson had no history of treating Azevedo. They simply crossed paths in the admissions unit at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in April 2022 while Hudson was dealing with another patient. Hudson would tell police that Azevedo suddenly grabbed and possibly struck him, and that Azevedo was quickly brought under control and taken back to his room. No injuries were noted.

There was a specific reason that Hudson wanted to report the alleged attack to police: "Dr. Hudson states that Azevedo is treatment-resistant and has been an issue at Waypoint. When he gets released, he goes home to his mother, gets violent with her, she refuses to pursue charges, and he ends right back in the same situation," says the OPP report.

"He is hoping that if the male is charged for assault at this point, he would be able to go through the courts and potentially be deemed not criminally responsible (NCR). If that is the case, Azevedo can find a more permanent home and treatment plan on the forensic unit of Waypoint, and not be a future threat to his mother or other members of the public on his release."

That's not what ended up happening.

Instead, Azevedo, a 39-year-old man living with a severe form of schizophrenia, has been repeatedly found to be unfit to stand trial. In the meantime, he's been kept in isolation at Waypoint under what's known in the medical world as seclusion.

As the assault charge continues to linger over his head, Azevedo spends most of his days locked alone in his room; this has been his default living situation since first arriving at Waypoint in November 2021.

It's been almost five years, and counting.

One word sums up his parents' feelings about their youngest son's ongoing care at Waypoint: terrified.



Jorge and Maria Azevedo, at their home in Barrie.

Arlyn McAdorey/Toronto Star

"We fear for Andrew's safety and well-being in this hospital setting," Jorge and Maria Azevedo wrote in a letter this year to the Ontario Review Board (ORB), which [decides the fate of people found NCR or unfit to stand trial](#).

"We are not trying to interfere with care. We are trying to protect our son and ensure he is treated as a human being, not just a risk to be managed."

Seclusion is considered by psychiatrists — as well as Waypoint's own policy — to be the option of last resort when dealing with a patient who presents an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. In other psychiatric hospitals, its use is typically measured in hours or days, due to its well-known detrimental impact on a person's mental health.

However, a Star investigation has revealed that people like Andrew Azevedo have been in seclusion at Waypoint, the province's only high-secure forensic facility in Penetanguishene, Ont., for years at a time. In Part 1 of this series, [the Star reported on the case of Camelott Hamblett](#), who has spent the last 20 years in seclusion at Waypoint — possibly the longest anyone has spent in isolation in an Ontario hospital.

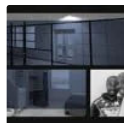
The Star's reporting has revealed that [leading experts have described the hospital's practice](#) as "abusive," "egregious," "grossly in excess" of other North American facilities, and "completely inconsistent with recovery-oriented, trauma-informed care."

It has also raised questions about whether the ORB could and should have done more to help get patients out of long-term seclusion.



20 YEARS IN ISOLATION: PART 1

The story of Camelott Hamblett and why he's spent two decades locked in a room alone at this Ontario psychiatric hospital



20 YEARS IN ISOLATION: PART 2

Why this Ontario psychiatric hospital's use of long-term isolation is being called 'abusive' — 'The likes of which I have never seen'



20 YEARS IN ISOLATION: PART 3

This expert panel had the power to challenge Camelott Hamblett's 20 years in isolation inside an Ontario hospital. Why didn't it?

Meanwhile, Azevedo's condition appears to be getting worse, his family says.

"We are not asking for unsafe decisions to be made. We are asking for a change to a system that is keeping him contained, but not helping him heal," his parents wrote in their letter to the ORB.

"We are terrified that continued deterioration will leave Andrew with no quality of life and no chance at recovery."

One key difference between Hamblett and Azevedo is that while Hamblett was found NCR and his criminal case concluded long ago, Azevedo's case remains active, as he has yet to be found fit to stand trial.

When someone is found NCR, "at least they've had their day in court," said Anita Szigeti, a lawyer and expert on mental health law who represents both men.

For Azevedo, "there's no end in sight," she said. "It irks me and sort of eats away at me."



We are trying to protect our son and ensure he is treated as a human being, not just a risk to be managed.

Asked about Azevedo's case, Waypoint's president and CEO said she couldn't comment on individual patients due to privacy reasons, but said the hospital takes a "patient-centred approach" to care.

Seclusion is not a punitive measure, Dr. Nadiya Sunderji said. "It is a safety measure to ensure patients can receive the care they need," she said.

Azevedo's parents, who live in Barrie, just want their son back home. In an interview, they said they're fully aware he has a serious mental illness, but they note they've worked with community mental health supports to help him successfully live with them in the past.

Andrew's bed is done up, and his clothes are in his room, Jorge said.

"He's just caged right now. It can't just be that they hold somebody in their room and keep them there like a dog."

Maria said her son's plight has sent her anxiety levels skyrocketing.

"This is my fight," she said. "I want my son to come home to have a decent life. I want him to have dignity."

Azevedo's childhood and early struggles with mental illness

Azevedo grew up with his two older brothers in the Toronto area. As Maria puts it: "His life was soccer."



Family photographs of Andrew Azevedo.

Arlyn McAdorey/Toronto Star

The family would travel around the country and abroad as Azevedo competed in tournaments; his dad was his coach.

His sister-in-law, Susan, who has known Azevedo since he was a kid, described him as soft-spoken and sweet, with a quick wit — the strongest athlete of the three boys.

He was a happy child, Jorge said. "But then, around 16-17 years old, he was not a happy kid anymore."

His parents remember it like this: the family was staying in a hotel in Montreal when Azevedo suddenly came into his parents' room, saying he was very scared. He then wouldn't play the next day. They decided to cut the tournament short and return to Toronto.

"We didn't know what it was," Maria said. "He was seeing things, he was seeing God, hearing voices, being afraid."

They took Azevedo to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. It was the beginning of Azevedo's journey through the Ontario health system for mental illness, and he was diagnosed in short order with schizophrenia.

"Since then, it's just been doctors and hospitals; basically, that's his life after that," Maria said. "But he always came home. Always. His life was good. He had a life."

Azevedo's needs were simple when living with his parents, Jorge said: soccer and food. He liked being outdoors with his family, and Maria would take him to the field just to kick the ball at the net. It made him happy.



Andrew Azevedo, right, with his father, Jorge

Family photo

He was also supported by the Canadian Mental Health Association's [assertive community treatment \(ACT\) team](#), which includes a psychiatrist, social worker, nurse, and case manager, providing treatment and support services to individuals with serious mental illnesses living in the community.

"He always had help," Maria said. "He'd had his issues, yes, with his voices he's listening to. But if you talk to him, Andrew is normal. Andrew is a good guy."

Azevedo is sent to Waypoint

Before Waypoint, Azevedo spent almost a year at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences after assaulting a UPS worker. Maria said the incident happened as Azevedo was paying for a haircut; she believes he hit the worker from behind, though she said he wasn't injured. The police took Azevedo to a local hospital, and from there he was transferred to Ontario Shores. Maria said the assault charge ended up being dismissed. (To this day, Azevedo has no criminal record.)

In November 2021, two months after Azevedo was discharged from Ontario Shores, Maria called the ACT team to report that her son was running after her. He was taken by ambulance to the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie.



Maria Azevedo looks at photographs of her children hanging on the wall of her home.

Arlyn McAdorey/Toronto Star

But, according to his parents, his stay in the hospital barely lasted two days.

“All of a sudden, we go to visit him, and he isn’t there,” Maria said. “They just sent him to Waypoint without our knowledge and without our permission.”

According to voluminous medical records reviewed by the Star, it was a few weeks after his arrival at Waypoint that Azevedo was first placed in seclusion after attempting to assault a patient. He remained there as he was “demonstrating increased aggression and continued to assault staff when brought out of seclusion,” the records say.

He was given clozapine, a medication used to treat schizophrenia when other antipsychotic drugs have failed, and underwent several sessions of electroconvulsive therapy, but there was little improvement noted.

By the spring of 2022, the decision was made to “trial Mr. Azevedo out of seclusion, with the aim of potentially discharging him home,” the records state. It was at this point, in April 2022, that he allegedly assaulted Hudson, the psychiatrist. Azevedo was put back in seclusion, where he’s been ever since.

Szigeti, who became Azevedo’s lawyer in the last year after his previous lawyer died, said she’s seen this happen before — someone with good intentions wanting to use the criminal justice system “toward some altruistic goal.”

The police report attributes to Hudson — who was never Azevedo’s doctor — “this benevolent intent about how going through the criminal justice system would somehow make Andrew’s life better,” Szigeti said.

“And then look what happened.”

The result of Hudson’s police report has been devastating. Azevedo’s parents wrote in their letter to the ORB. “He did not know Andrew’s history, did not understand our family’s role in his care,” they wrote.

Maria also disputed in an interview what Hudson reported to the police. She said she’s always been prepared to support her son living at home.

“They’re taking him away from me,” she said. “This was just a setup to keep my son locked up where he is now.”

Hudson declined the Star’s request for comment, citing privacy concerns.

'How do we stop this vicious circle'

According to hospital reports, Azevedo "is not active" in his room, and is often observed lying on his bed and talking to himself. He has an MP3 player to listen to music, a mini soccer ball to kick around, and has occasionally done arts and crafts in the room.

He's taken out of his room in restraints by staff for periods of "seclusion relief" — typically around two hours a day spent doing activities in other parts of the facility, like taking a shower or calling home. The patient can choose whether or not to participate in seclusion relief. When out of his room, Azevedo likes watching movies or soccer games, and will sometimes interact with others.



The grounds of Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in Penetanguishene, Ont.

Sophie Bouquillon for the Toronto Star

His family has noticed he's gained weight, struggles to walk, and has poor hygiene. He's expressed a fear that he's going to die inside Waypoint.

"He's telling us, 'I'm going to die, I'm going to die,' and that really scares us," Jorge said.

An order keeping a patient in seclusion at Waypoint is made daily following a doctor's assessment, though not necessarily by the patient's treating psychiatrist, nor always in person. A patient in long-term seclusion is also supposed to be evaluated in person by a psychiatrist every 28 days.

Records show that nearly every antipsychotic medication has been tried on Azevedo, and that the hospital has recommended more sessions of electroconvulsive therapy, which involves causing brief seizures by passing a small electrical current through the brain. Azevedo's family is against the idea, saying they feel previous sessions worsened his mental state and left him traumatized.

Waypoint has also sought at least two external reviews, both conducted by the same psychiatrist: Dr. Yedishtra Naidoo from St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. Both times, Naidoo concluded that seclusion continued to be necessary.

"Absent seclusion, (Azevedo) would be at extremely high risk for imminently committing violent acts against co-patients and staff, and sexually inappropriate behaviour owing to his hypersexuality and disinhibition at times," Naidoo found in 2024, recommending some medication adjustments.

Szigeti, Azevedo's lawyer, said what's missing in the hospital reports and decisions by the ORB maintaining Azevedo's detention at Waypoint is whether the seclusion itself is worsening his symptoms. She pointed out that the alleged attack on Hudson happened shortly after being released from more than four months in isolation.



Lawyer Anita Szigeti.

Sophie Bouquillon/Toronto Star

“What we need to know,” she said, “is whether seclusion for years on end is potentially contributing to the aggressivity, and how do we stop this vicious circle?”

In a letter on behalf of the family submitted at Azevedo’s most recent ORB hearing in February, Azevedo’s sister-in-law, Susan, wrote that they understand restrictive measures, including seclusion, are necessary for now, but the family is concerned about Waypoint’s “prolonged reliance” on restraint without a strategy to reduce it over time.

After all, she wrote, it is clear that her brother-in-law is only getting worse. She also expressed concern that the hospital reports do not document how long Azevedo spends outside of his room on seclusion relief, the number of full days he’s gone without any seclusion relief, and how often relief was withheld due to staffing or other operational issues.

She wrote that Azevedo’s lack of improvement must be understood in the context of several factors, including his prolonged seclusion.

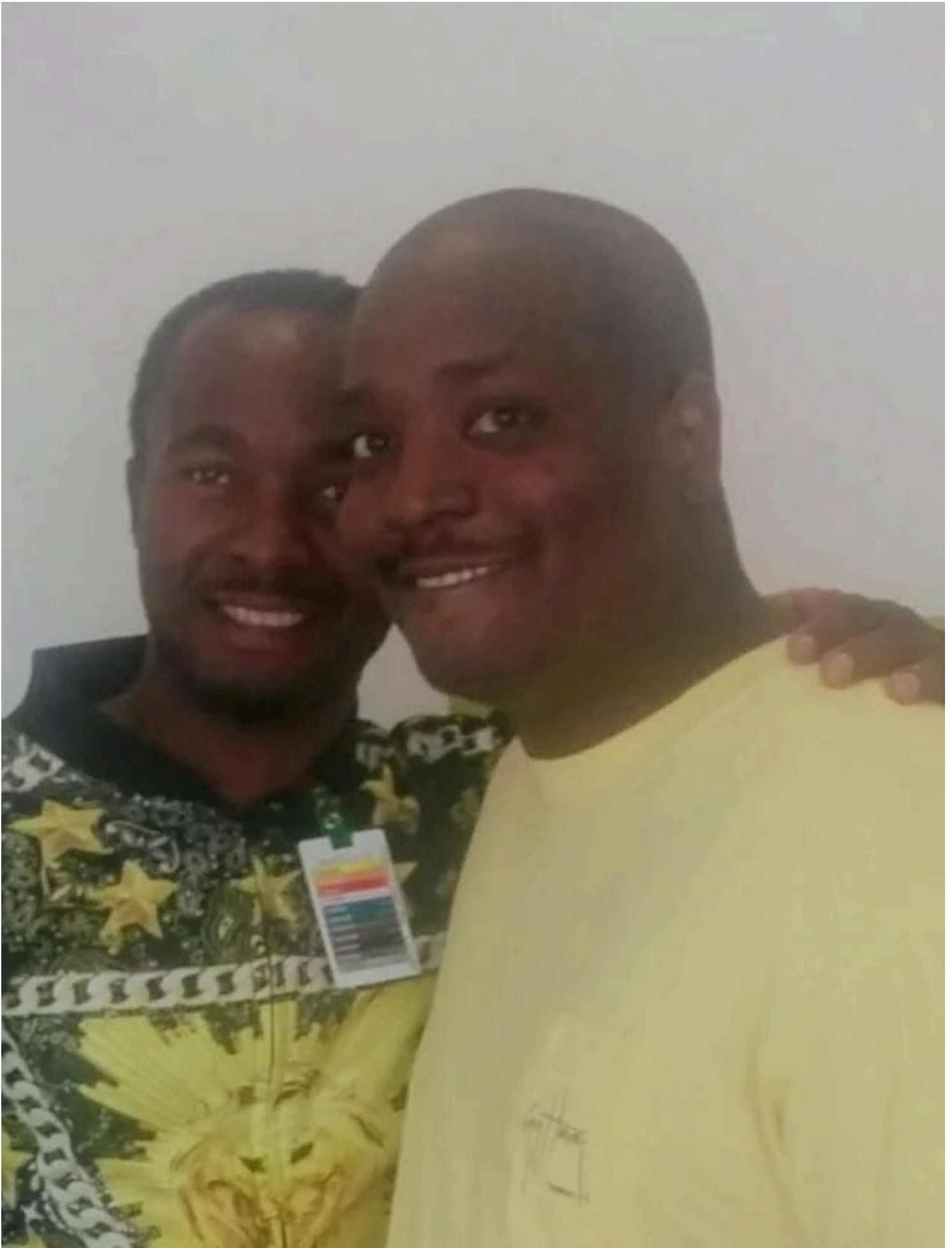
In an interview, Susan said she doesn’t feel unsafe around her brother-in-law and has had no problem bringing her children along for hospital visits. She said the family is focused on “baby steps” on Azevedo’s road to rehabilitation, the first one being: ensuring he’s out of his room on seclusion relief every day.

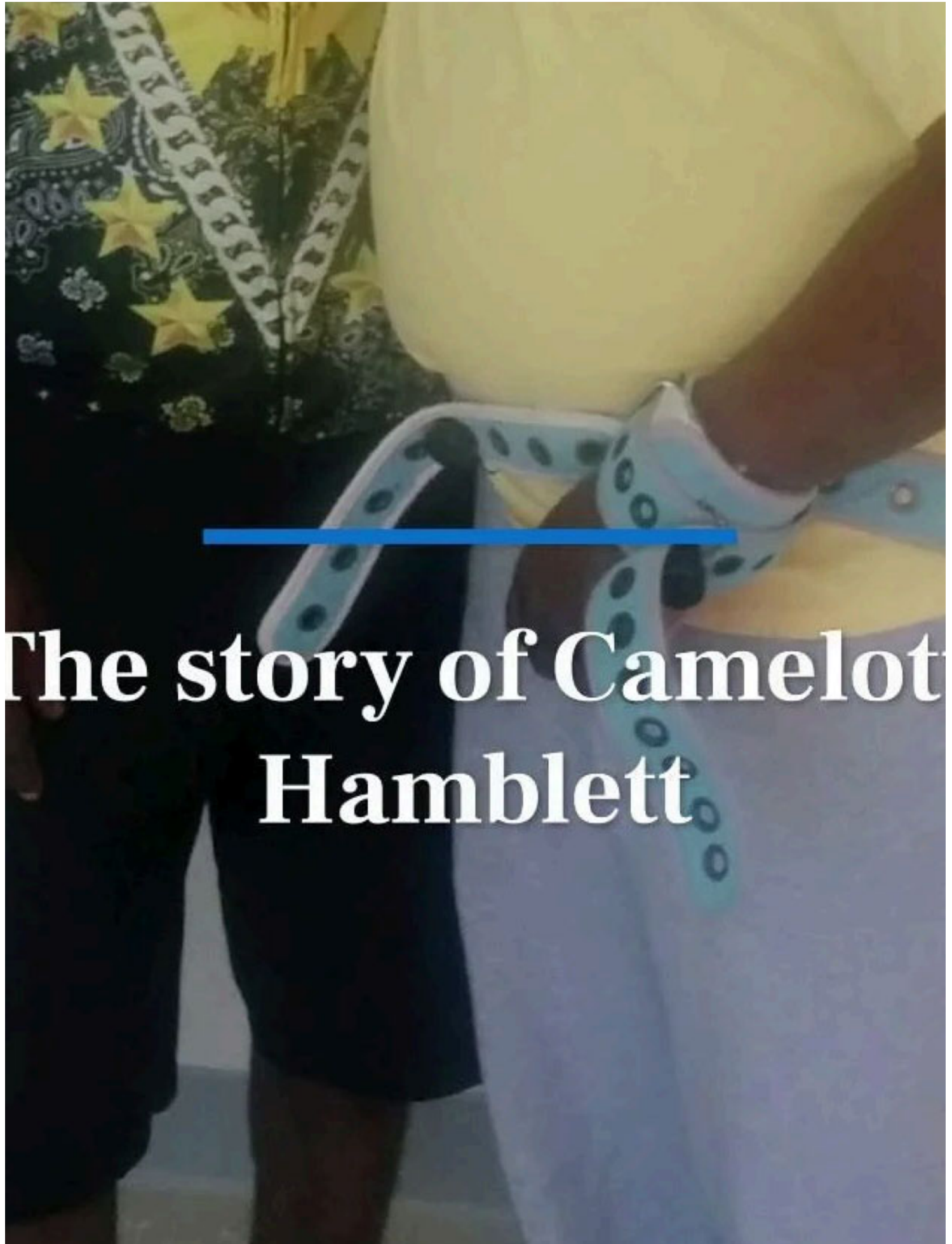
“It breaks my heart that Andrew, who used to be up and down the soccer field, always outside till the lights came on, hasn’t been outside, hasn’t heard the birds, hasn’t had any fresh air,” Susan said.

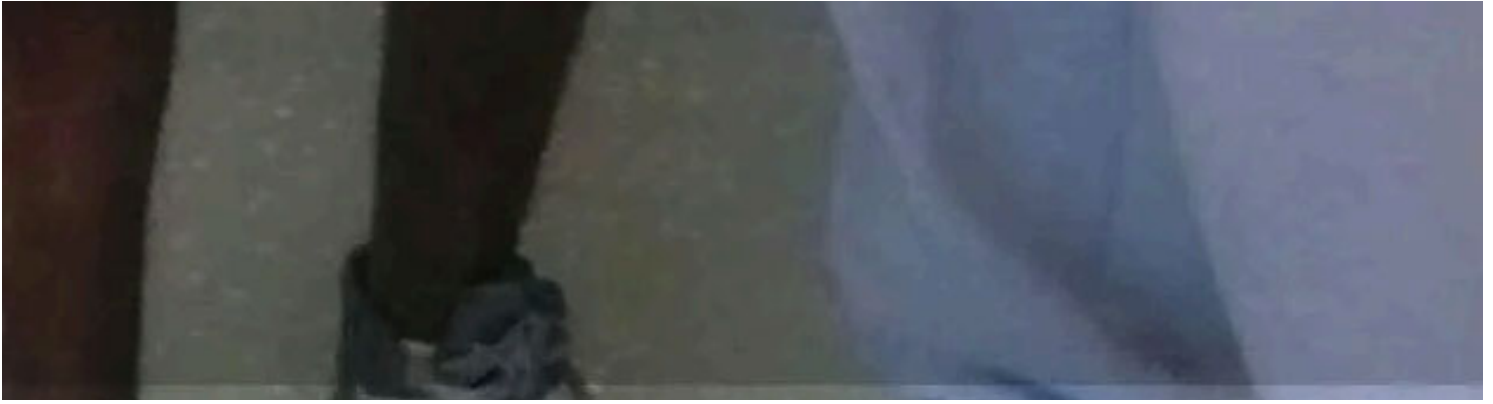
Hope amid the Star’s investigation

Four years after the incident involving Hudson, Azevedo’s simple assault charge has yet to be dealt with by the courts.

Following a hearing each year, the ORB, made up of former judges, lawyers, doctors, and laypersons, has confirmed that Azevedo remains unfit to stand trial. The records show he’s struggled to understand his options for a plea, and can’t explain what it means to take an oath.







Camelott Hamblett has spent the last 20 years of his life living in isolation at Waypoint hospital in Penetanguishene, Ontario.

In the case of Camelott Hamblett, the Star's investigation found that the board rarely inquired about his living conditions in 20 years of seclusion, despite having a duty to look into the issue. In Azevedo's case, the board did ask about his quality of life in 2024, but made no recommendation to try to end the seclusion.

But there may be some hope on the horizon.

Earlier this year, the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned the ORB's latest decision in Hamblett's case, with the senior judges expressing shock and ordering an independent assessment by an outside expert.

Azevedo's last ORB hearing came one month later, in February. It brought a surprise: Waypoint and the Crown supported Szigeti's request for his own independent assessment, which the board then ordered.

Szigeti believes the court's decision in Hamblett's case, the Star's ongoing reporting, including for this investigation, and "the public's reception of shock and horror and empathy" appear to be making an impact.

"When the Toronto Star broke the story, it reached a lot of people," Szigeti said, adding she has been flooded with sympathetic messages. The overwhelming reaction, she said: "How does something like this happen?"

Waypoint may have been "persuaded that they might not know everything," she said.

Szigeti added that while she's encouraged by the co-operation, she hopes the hospital will now proactively seek out outside expertise, rather than wait for the ORB to order assessments in individual cases.

"Because we can't have masses of people secluded for years on end and decades on end," she said. "It's just not humane."

Waypoint won't say how many patients remain in long-term seclusion

Asked about the decision to support Szigeti's request for an independent assessment, CEO Sunderji said Waypoint is "open and willing to explore" all avenues that could improve a patient's quality of life.

Azevedo's assessment is expected to be conducted in the coming months by Andrea Monteiro, a criminologist and consultant who focuses on reducing the use of segregation in the correctional system.



We can't have masses of people secluded for years on end and decades on end. It's just not humane.

"We must look for ways to improve Mr. Azevedo's circumstances," says the ORB's decision, specifically ordering Monteiro to set out recommendations to reduce and "ultimately discontinue" Azevedo's seclusion. "Seeking input from someone who has relevant experience, albeit in a different context, offers an opportunity for new approaches and, along with them, hope."

Waypoint has not responded to questions as to why it uses seclusion for prolonged periods of time, nor how many of its patients are currently in long-term seclusion.

A proposed class-action lawsuit launched by Toronto law firm Rochon Genova named five other patients — not including Hamblett and Azevedo — who had been kept in seclusion at Waypoint. (Although the courts have refused to certify the lawsuit as a class action, Rochon Genova has said it is exploring other avenues to pursue the matter.)

The past year has been good to the Azevedo family, said Jorge: Susan joined their advocacy efforts and found Szigeti, the independent assessment was ordered, and their son's story is getting attention.

"I hope this will open Waypoint's eyes to what treatment is — because it's not seclusion," he said.

He and Maria visit their son several times a week; Maria said she's even offered to pay for security so she can take her son out herself every day.

As for Azevedo, he's been blunt about what he wants: leaving seclusion. Last year, a psychiatrist noted he wanted to go to Portugal to play soccer.

"I know that my son will never be 100 per cent, we do know that, but it's OK," Maria said. "Let me take it one day at a time. Let me help him. I'm his mother."



Jacques Gallant is a Toronto-based reporter covering courts, justice and legal affairs for the Star. Reach him by email at jgallant@thestar.ca or follow him on Twitter: [@JacquesGallant](https://twitter.com/JacquesGallant)

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