

The following fictitious vignette will form the basis of the discussion for the webinar, Mental illness, terrorism and grievance-fuelled violence: Understanding the nexus, broadcast on Monday 18 March, 2019.

Emir is a 28 year old male (DOB 1990) living with his parents, Umit and Leyla, in the outer suburbs of Sydney. His older sister, Ayesha lives independently with her husband.

Umit and Leyla, met in Australia having both migrated to Australia from Turkey as children, and have returned to Turkey annually as a family every Australian summer. From age 15, Emir elected to stay in Australia over summer with his paternal grandfather while his parents were away.

Emir attended a non-denominational school and did very well academically, yet struggled socially. His classmates teased him for being a *'mummies' boy, skinny, weak and a baby*. He often begged his mum to let him stay home or would come home early claiming he felt ill.

In April of 2007, the year Emir was undertaking his Higher School Certificate (HSC), the Virginia Tech mass shooting occurred. Emir became fascinated by this event; wanting to learn everything about it and preceding events like it. Leyla said at the time it was as if *'someone had flicked a switch and my boy became a different person'*. He rarely slept and had a strange energy about him. She confided in their GP that she felt she needed to protect Emir from Umit who had a *'very short fuse'* and wouldn't tolerate his son's erratic and unpredictable behaviour.

The situation at home came to a crisis point when, following a violent outburst where Emir

threatened Ayesha with a steak knife, the police were called. He was unable to be subdued and was admitted to a mental health inpatient facility where he was diagnosed with schizo-affective disorder. He remained an inpatient for three weeks after which he was discharged, under a community treatment order, to the local community mental health clinic and into his parents' care.

Following the disruption to his HSC Emir didn't return to school. He felt, and still does feel angry, *'I was robbed of the opportunity to be someone, to make a mark'*. Emir blamed his class mates for his *'one and only breakdown'* as well as his parents for *'favouring Ayesha over me. They think I'm weak but I'm not'*. He doesn't accept that he has a mental illness, instead insisting *'I've just got different interests to people, particularly people like Ayesha who only have superficial concerns. Most people don't know what is important in this world'*.

After receiving treatment and care from the community mental health clinic for four years and with medication compliance and stable mental health, Emir's diagnosis is amended to residual schizophrenia and the clinic discharge him under shared care arrangements into the care of the family GP.

Over the next three years Emir sees the GP on a monthly basis and is thought to be compliant with his medication (an achievement the GP attributes more to Leyla rather than to Emir).

He spends his days at home with his mother, most of the time in his room on the internet continuing to feed his interest in, as Leyla puts it, *'current affairs'*, despite reassuring Leyla that he is well connected to an online community with whom he regularly plays war games. Leyla reports he sleeps long hours, spends his days at home with her and has few, if any, friends. He spends most of the time in his room on the internet and rarely comes out, even for meals.

The GP has noted his increasingly poor personal grooming and hygiene and that he rarely makes eye contact with him, the reception staff or family and that he is generally subdued and only responds briefly to direct questions. Leyla also reports Emir to be generally withdrawn, rarely speaks and tends to mumble to himself, except for unprovoked and increasingly regular violent outbursts, focused mainly on Ayesha. He has come to the attention of the local police twice, once for trying to set Ayesha's husband's car alight and the second time for starting a fire in the family's garden shed. At Umit's urging, the police in both instances, did not charge him.

In 2014 the Sydney Lindt Café Siege occurred, engaging Emir's interest. Leyla confides in the GP that while she is worried that Emir seems to have an *'unusual interest in people dying'* she also shares *'my boy is getting better. He seems to have a renewed energy and zest for life'*.

Present situation:

Just before her departure to Turkey, Leyla tells the GP that for the last year or so Emir has been spending more time away from home with his *'new friends from a local church'*. While he is

secretive about how he is spending his time with his friends, she doesn't feel comfortable questioning him: *'he is an adult, it is not for me to ask. I'm just happy he is busy and having fun'*.

Today is Emir's scheduled monthly appointment with the GP. When he attends he is still wearing the combat gear he has been wearing for the last couple of appointments. He becomes irritable when the GP questions his outfit and answers evasively *'why are you asking me this? They are just clothes. Do you always ask people why they are wearing what they are wearing?'*

He is unusually fidgety, excited and nervous. He tells the GP he is thinking of travelling to Turkey to *'surprise mum and visit some friends in neighbouring countries'* but becomes evasive when the GP queries where else he plans to go. When the GP says he needs to know to ascertain which, if any, vaccinations he will require, Emir dismissively and antagonistically responds *'just to see new friends. Ones my church friends have introduced me to online'* but he refuses to share where they are located. Upon questioning which church he is attending, he tells the GP his friends encouraged him to attend twelve months ago *'I now pray there five times a day. I finally feel like I belong somewhere'*.

He asks the GP to not ruin the surprise of his unannounced visit to Turkey by telling his grandfather, in fact to not let anyone know *'this stuff.....I feel like I've got a purpose, finally the opportunity I've been waiting for.....a chance to prove myself'*.