

Daughter's death leads to debut at 79

Gillian Furmage

A 79-year-old woman will make her debut as a playwright on Monday with a play about the potentially devastating impact of prescription drugs.

Millie Kieve's production, *Cruise to Hell*, is based on her experience of her daughter's death in 1995, caused by an adverse reaction to medication. Inspired by one-woman shows she had seen at the Fringe, Kieve, an actress, felt moved to tell her story on stage in the belief that it could help to prevent other people going through the same turmoil.

"I believe creatively that raising awareness can save lives because so many people have told me 'I had no idea'," she said.

Karen, her daughter, was unwell when she fell to her death at the age of 30 from a window that had a broken catch. She "was overdosed on a drug, given three times the dose she should have been given", Kieve said. "It was an anti-Parkinson drug to stop the side-effects of a psychotropic drug."



The show is based on a mother's experience of her daughter's death caused by a reaction to medication
GETTY IMAGES

The label on one of the medicines said that it should be prescribed for three months, but she said that her daughter was kept on it for 18 months at three times the normal dose.

"All together she was in a confused state, she looked grey," Kieve said. "She had auto-immune thyroid disease, they found after she'd died."

After Karen's death Kieve set up a charity, Adverse Psychiatric Reactions Information Link (April).

Despite having an early passion for the stage Kieve did not act professionally until she was

40 because of her husband's misgivings.

The loss of a close relative "made me rethink life" and spurred her to enrol in drama school, she said. Her daughter died just after Kieve had returned from a touring production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, which made her turn away from acting and towards charity work.

She often wondered what would have happened if she had known more about the medication her daughter was taking. "If I'd known, none of this would have happened. We wouldn't have lost Karen. You never know, maybe I'd be in a musical on the West End."

Cruise to Hell is at the Space on the Mile from August 12-17 ■