This is a story written by a 48 year old male who presented with behavioural problems and was diagnosed by chance through an ophthalmologist noticing Kayser-Fleischer rings in his eyes: ©

My name is Eddie and I was born on Friday, 13th—was that an omen? The youngest of three children, our family remained in Scotland until shortly after I started primary school in 1975, when my father, a printer with the *Sunday Post,* was offered a job working for a similar national newspaper in Rhodesia. And so started our new life so different from the old, with hot weather, a large house with a swimming pool and animals such as elephants, lions and rhinos practically on our doorstep! My only memory of attending a hospital as a young boy was being rushed to A&E after managing to lodge a bead up one of my nostrils!! And my only recollection of copper being mentioned was in relation to the many copper mines found in that part of Africa!

When I was about 10, my parents split up and my father returned to Scotland. Soon afterwards, I was sent 350 miles and some 7 hours away from home to a colonial style, private boarding school in Africa where both physical and mental abuse from the staff and senior boys were an every day occurrence. It was tough! Academically, I would say I was an average student, preferring the arts to the sciences and gaining 7 O'levels including a top grade in English. We spent many holidays in Scotland, but I missed my dad and at the age of 17 decided to return to live with him back in Glasgow leaving my mother, stepfather and two older sisters in what had then become Zimbabwe.

Once back in Scotland, I enrolled on a 2 year Hotel Management course at the Glasgow College of Food and Technology. My career got off to a good start and by the age of 23 I was married. Two years later my son came along. At around this time I found a lump in my neck which was drained, but it reappeared and was later diagnosed as thyroid cancer, for which I was and continue to be effectively treated.

Meanwhile, gaining experience in all aspects of hotel management meant moving from job to job, including 2 x four year stays in Bermuda. We were living very comfortably but I was away working horrendous hours at top end hotels like Turnberry and Gleneagles, and the marriage started to falter resulting in divorce ten years later. I was devastated and turned to drink. Looking back, I would say that I operated as a *functioning alcoholic* for around 14 years. However, my last job was in Aberdeen and in the end I could no longer function. I was admitted to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary in 2017 and was told that I had cirrhosis of the liver and if I didn't mend my ways I would only have 6 months to live. I was placed in a rehab unit for 3 months during which time I stopped drinking altogether.

Since the divorce I had continued to visit my son in Ayrshire, whenever I could. On one such occasion in March 2018 I was out shopping when I was subjected to an unprovoked attack by a hooded youth who struck me in the face with a glass bottle. My injuries necessitated a trip to the local A&E department. Here, an ophthalmologist examined the damage to my eyes and said he could see copper rings called Kayser-Fleischer rings in them. I had no idea what he was talking about and I left, not giving it another thought.

My road to self-destruction gathered apace. Soon afterwards, I was arrested for leaving a sushi bar without paying. I was drunk and put into a police holding cell. While there, I was charged with an alcohol induced non-violent crime against a Police Officer which resulted in an 8 month custodial sentence—and a lifetime of shame! It was the first time I had ever been in trouble with the Police and the experience sobered me up rather quickly!

At the time, it seemed like the worst day of my life...

Being on thyroxin as a result of my thyroid cancer, I was having monthly blood checks while in prison. One day I was summoned to the health centre to be seen by a doctor. She said, "I'm not going to beat about the bush, but you have a rare genetic disease called Wilson's disease and it is too late to treat." It was the 4 November 2018. It came without any warning and I was devastated. At the time it seemed like the worst day of my life but it has proved to be my salvation.

I was released two months later after starting on penicillamine and I resolved never to drink again, and I haven't. My new found freedom from alcohol has allowed me to raise funds for *Cancer Research UK* and up to the beginning of the pandemic I had collected over £1,250. I am now living in supportive accommodation as I have also been diagnosed with early onset dementia. I can't wait for restrictions to be lifted later this month so that I can return to the things that I enjoy most like church fellowship, swimming, dancing and Zumba classes!

Looking back at my lifetime's mistakes, and some triumphs, I am comforted in the knowledge that I have become a better person since the days of alcohol addiction, self-destruction and hurting others. Cancer, alcohol addiction, a diagnosis of Wilson's disease at the age of 48 and early onset dementia will not deter me and I will continue to do all I can to improve myself physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. I hope you won't judge me for my past life. I firmly believe that there is good in all of us. I am grateful to the support I have received from WDSG-UK and I wish all other patients well.