

US boy whose premature aging inspired film dies

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A teenager whose battle with a rare genetic condition that accelerates the aging process became the subject of an HBO documentary has died. Sam Berns was 17.

Berns, of Foxborough, Massachusetts, died Friday after complications from Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome, commonly known as progeria. The Progeria Research Foundation, which was founded by his parents, announced his death.

Berns was diagnosed with progeria when he was 22 months old. His parents founded the nonprofit foundation after encountering a lack of information and research on the condition, whose victims live an average of 13 years.

The work by his [parents](#), Leslie Gordon and Scott Berns, who are doctors, on behalf of progeria patients is featured in the [documentary](#) "Life According to Sam." The exposure has brought greater recognition to the condition, which causes musculoskeletal degeneration, cardiovascular problems and other symptoms associated with aging.

New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft mourned Berns' death, saying he had invited the teen to be the football team's honorary captain for Saturday night's playoff game against the Indianapolis Colts and was looking forward to spending time with him and his family.

"I loved Sam Berns and am richer for having known him," Kraft said in a

statement Saturday.

Kraft, after being introduced to Berns and attending the HBO premiere of the documentary in New York in October, made a \$500,000 matching pledge to the foundation. Berns, a sports fan who was invited to a Patriots practice that month, gave the players an impromptu motivational speech, the Boston Globe reported.

Berns was asked to name his favorite player. He didn't have one. It takes a team to succeed, he said.

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