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Alarm didn't sound when girl died at Sick Kids

Nurse horrified heart monitor didn't work

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Shortly after 10-year-old Lisa Shore died in a hospital bed, a horrified Sick Children's Hospital nurse questioned why a heart monitor didn't sound an alarm, a coroner's inquest heard yesterday.

Ruth Doerkson, Lisa's primary care nurse, told education nurse Mary Douglas she turned on the corometric monitor attached to the Thornhill girl, but Douglas said Doerkson told her the machine's high-pitched alarm never went off to signal Lisa was in distress.

"She was miffed," Douglas testified. "She kept saying, 'I left her on the monitor, why didn't it go off? I don't understand, what did I miss?'"

Lisa died Oct. 22, 1998 after being admitted to emergency to control acute leg pain from a rare disorder. The hospital gave her morphine to control the pain.

Douglas said a terribly upset Doerkson took her aside after Lisa died to tell her she had left the heart monitor on, but had turned off an alarm on the same machine that signalled depressed breathing.

Douglas said Doerkson told her, "I never do that. I don't know why I did that. Maybe I shouldn't have done that."

Inquest evidence suggests monitor wasn't turned on

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The inquest heard turning off the respiratory alarm may have been a fatal decision, since a side effect of morphine is a low respiratory rate.

Douglas confirmed the respiratory alarm had been turned off when she checked it. However, that wouldn't explain why the heart alarm didn't sound.

Douglas said Doerkson questioned several times why the heart monitor malfunctioned, but other evidence at the inquest suggested neither the heart monitor nor the respiratory alarm was on at all.

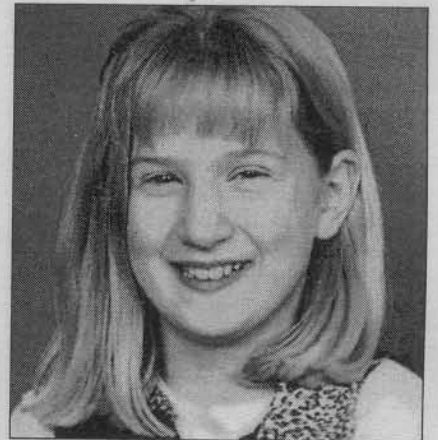
A doctor who pulled the leads — cords that connect the patient to the monitor — from Lisa's chest has testified the machine never sounded the alarm at that point. The corometric monitor is designed to alarm when the leads are detached from a patient, which suggests the machine was turned off.

Douglas testified that Doerkson later explained she turned off the respiratory alarm because it kept sounding a false alarm, but Lisa's mother, Sharon, maintains she heard no alarm as she slept next to her daughter's hospital bed.

Although she has yet to testify, Sharon Shore has told reporters she believes her daughter was never hooked up to a corometric monitor.

Circumstantial evidence yesterday appeared to support her position.

Steven Bauer, an equipment manag-



LISA SHORE: Thornhill girl died at Sick Children's Hospital while being treated for leg pain.

er at the hospital, testified the exact monitor used on Lisa was never tracked down.

The inquest also heard Doerkson never made a note on Lisa's chart saying she was on a corometric monitor.

Since Lisa's death, the hospital has brought in new procedures requiring nurses to note when patients are using the monitor.

In earlier testimony, the inquest heard Doerkson never saw a doctor's order asking Lisa be placed on both a corometric monitor and a pulse monitor.

Douglas said the pulse monitor was never used, but the corometric monitor was.