

Family demands investigation into daughter's death

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

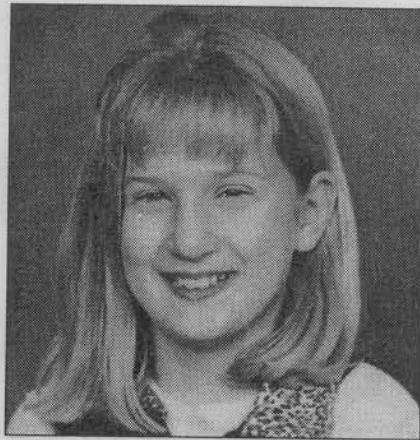
It's only the next step in what promises to be a long drawn-out process, but Sharon and Bill Shore will not stop searching for answers in the tragic death of their daughter.

The Thornhill family has filed official complaints with the College of Nurses of Ontario against four Hospital for Sick Children nurses involved in caring for 10-year-old Lisa the night she died.

"In simple terms, I expect the College of Nurses to look at the nursing care provided to Lisa in a far more objective and appropriate manner than anyone at Sick Kids ever did," Sharon Shore said.

Buoyed by an inquest verdict of homicide, delivered late last month after a 20-day coroner's probe, the Shores are demanding an investigation into the nurses' conduct — while caring for Lisa, after her death and during the inquest.

A homicide verdict at an inquest cannot be used to assess criminal responsibility; it simply means the killing of one human being by another. But the Toronto Police homicide unit is continuing to review the case and the jury's 35 recom-



LISA SHORE: 10-year-old died at Hospital for Sick Children Oct. 22, 1998.

mendations, said Staff-Sgt. Fred Ellarby.

Sharon and Bill Shore await the results of that probe as well — the first independent investigation into Lisa's death on Oct. 22, 1998 and into the inquest process itself.

"If there are grounds for criminal charges, well, we're hoping that's what comes out of it," Shore said.

Lisa died in her hospital bed less than 12 hours after being admitted for acute leg pain. The jury found Lisa may have had a fatal reaction to the combination of painkillers prescribed, a reaction that should have been caught before the crisis stage.

Lisa was not monitored for side effects hourly, nor was she hooked up to a working corometric monitor as doctors ordered. Nurses did not check the computer program, Kidcom, for doctor's orders and missed a hand-written note on Lisa's chart reading "Check Kidcom orders".

The family's complaints against primary care nurses Ruth Doerksen and Anagail Soriano allege "unprofessional unethical and dishonourable behavior". The Shores say the two nurses failed to follow doctors orders, did not take vital signs as requested, failed to keep proper records, falsified records after Lisa died and then lied under oath during the inquest.

In the documents, the Shores clearly accuse Doerksen of a cover-up.

"...discovered Lisa dead and instead of taking action, attempted to cover up by attaching an apnea monitor to a dead child," and "concocted a story about false alarms to explain failure of one of the monitor's alarms to sound", the complaint states.

"The college has the opportunity to impose the penalty they see fit," Shore said. "I would hope they find Doerksen and Soriano are not fit to be nurses. I can't demand it at all, but I can expect a fair and objective investigation of our complaint."

Chief of Nursing Jean Reeder failed to report unethical conduct by her nurses, failed to report or terminate Doerksen and Soriano for substandard and negligent care provided to Lisa and coached Doerksen while on the witness stand, the complaint alleges.

Nursing educator Mary Douglas is also alleged to have coached nurses on the stand and failed to report unethical and substandard care by Doerksen and Soriano.

The allegations in the complaint have not been proven in court.

Included in the complaint against Douglas is the Shore's worry — obviously shared by the jury — about the veracity of her testimony.

During the inquest, Douglas was recalled as a witness. Jurors asked her to reflect on her previous statement that Lisa's heart rate jumping from 72 to 134 over several hours was not a concern.

"We have since heard from various people, doctors and such, that this heart rate is very concerning. Do you think this rate was not a concern?" the juror asked.

"No, I still don't think it was a concern," she replied.

College of Nurses of Ontario spokesperson Cindy Campbell said once investigators have done preliminary background work, the complaint is officially filed within the college system. After that investigators must wrap up their investigation and a five-member complaints committee must come to a determination within 120 days.

Options include oral cautions, written cautions or referral to the discipline committee for a hearing, which usually takes four to five months to schedule.

"The thing to remember is the college is here to protect the public, not to protect nurses. We support nurses on behalf of the public as users of nursing care," Campbell said.