

Charges dropped in Thornhill girl's death

Nurses still face disciplinary hearings over Lisa Shore case

BY JEFF MITCHELL
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The withdrawal of charges against two Hospital for Sick Children nurses only adds to Sharon Shore's anger over the death of her 10-year-old daughter Lisa.

"It's a disappointment, but it doesn't change the facts," Ms Shore said last Friday afternoon, hours after it was announced charges of criminal negligence causing death against nurses Ruth Doerksen and Anagaile Soriano were dropped by the Crown.

Ms Shore, an accountant, is studying for her law degree and says she wants to use her life experience to help people who feel they have been wronged by institutions.

Lisa Shore, of Thornhill, died of heart and respiratory failure while in the care of the Hospital for Sick Children in October 1998. She was given morphine after being admitted for leg pain, a complication of a broken bone she had sustained earlier.

After a highly publicized inquest in 2000, a coroner's jury ruled the death a homicide. Testimony indicated a series

of errors and communication failures led to the child's death.

In early 2001, criminal charges were laid against the two nurses.

Hospital for Sick Children officials have insisted throughout that, while some mistakes may have been made, Lisa's death was accidental.

They have also noted some procedural changes have been adopted in the wake of Lisa's death and the inquest.

"It's a day of mixed emotions. Although justice has been done and no one individual was found at fault, we remain deeply saddened for the Shore family and the loss of their child," said Mary Jo Haddad, chief nurse executive at the hospital.

"Admittedly, there were systemic problems at the time that contributed to this sad event," she said.

Shore family lawyer Frank Gomberg said the Crown's decision to withdraw charges is not a declaration of innocence. "What it amounts to is the Crown feeling it didn't have sufficient evidence to obtain a conviction."

Mr. Gomberg, who represented the family at the inquest, said the finding of the coroner's jury is significant.

"I think what you can conclude is the jury thought the hospital and nurses didn't do their jobs that night," he said.

The family now places its hopes in the College of Nurses of Ontario, which

is examining allegations of professional misconduct.

"The most troubling part, subsequent to (Lisa's) death, is that no one at the hospital has taken any responsibility at all," Ms Shore said.

College of Nurses spokesperson Deborah Jones confirmed proceedings against Ms Doerksen and Ms Soriano will resume now that the criminal matters have been resolved.

"We have allegations of professional misconduct against the nurses," Ms Jones said. "They will be appearing for a disciplinary hearing."

She doesn't know when that hearing will begin.

A written decision by the college's complaints committee, handed down Jan. 24, 2001, says it is alleged the two nurses "contravened a standard of practice of the profession or failed to meet the standards of practice of the profession".

It is alleged the nurses failed to follow doctors' orders, failed to adequately monitor Lisa while she was in care and failed to adequately obtain information regarding her condition and prescribed care, the document states.

The decision also alleges professional misconduct on a number of other fronts, including the falsification of records by the two nurses.

The allegations haven't been proven.