

Nurses' trial will help uncover truth, lawyer says

GIRL, 10, DIED IN HOSPITAL

BY JOSEPH BREAN

TORONTO • A trial of two nurses on criminal negligence charges arising from the death of a 10-year-old girl will help uncover the truth about why she died, the family's lawyer said yesterday.

Lisa Shore is believed to have died from respiratory depression caused by morphine and other drugs while under the care of Ruth Doerksen and Anagaile Soriano, nurses at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

Both nurses are expected to be charged today.

A coroner's inquest into the girl's death last year found it to be a homicide, which is not a criminal verdict, but means simply a death caused by a person.

"At the coroner's inquest, all the nurses were represented by the same lawyer. That's a serious flaw with the way the process unfolded," said Frank Gomberg, the Shore family's lawyer.

He said the nurses' individual testimony at a criminal trial, rather than their solidarity with the hospital and each other during the inquest, will reveal more about why Lisa died, and whether blame should be assigned.

"These two nurses will be represented by very competent lawyers and each lawyer will have allegiance to no one but his or her client, and neither of those lawyers will have any allegiance

to the hospital.... The chances of getting the truth are immeasurably increased when that happens," Mr. Gomberg said.

Lisa died in the early morning of Oct. 22, 1998. She had been admitted the previous night and was being treated for chronic pain after breaking her leg six months earlier.

The inquest heard she had been put on a morphine pump by her doctor, who instructed the nurses to check her vital signs and morphine-induced drowsiness every hour as an additional safeguard to the electronic heart rate and breathing monitor.

Ms. Doerksen testified she heard the monitor's breathing alarm go off four times. She reset it three times, then turned it off.

The inquest also heard that neither nurse consulted the doctor's instructions on the hospital's computer system, nor did they check her vital signs hourly.

Lisa's mother, Sharon Shore, who was sleeping next to her daughter that night, woke at 7 a.m. when doctors making their rounds came in and discovered Lisa dead from what is believed to be respiratory failure.

Search warrants for the chief coroner's office were signed on Monday and served by homicide detectives later that day. On Tuesday, warrants were served at the hospital.

Mrs. Shore declined to comment yesterday. "I'm a witness in this case, and it's going to be before the courts presumably, so I'm not going to comment publicly," she said.

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