

Crucial instructions missed on girl's chart, inquest told

Doctor's note on checking patient wasn't followed

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The nurse responsible for caring for 10-year-old Lisa Shore at the Hospital for Sick Children failed to read a line in the patient's chart asking nurses to follow computerized doctor's orders for monitoring the girl's condition.

Ruth Doerksen testified yesterday at an inquest that she read the terse nine-line chart containing instructions from Dr. Markus Schily, who saw Lisa in the emergency ward, but missed the line that read "see Kidcom orders."

Kidcom is the high-tech information system into which orders for all admitted patients at Sick Kids are entered.

Doerksen told the jurors she assumed these were her orders for caring for Lisa, "but for some reason" she missed the Kidcom line.

The jury has been told that Doerksen had access to a computer terminal and, like all other nurses, was automatically supposed to check Kidcom for orders when a new patient arrived from emergency.

None of the nurses caring for Lisa checked Kidcom as required, the jury was told.

Two specialists — a pathologist and an expert in the adverse effects of drugs — testified last week that Lisa's life could probably have been saved if nursing staff had detected her failing breathing in time to administer a drug to

counter the effects of morphine.

Lisa had been placed on a self-administered morphine device to relieve pain from a non-life-threatening disorder after being admitted to the hospital in the early hours of Oct. 22, 1998.

Schily's computerized orders required nurses to monitor Lisa extensively, as morphine is a dangerous drug that can seriously affect breathing and cause death.

Doerksen also testified that she failed to follow the hospital's protocol for monitoring children attached to morphine devices.

The protocol requires nurses to perform most of the monitoring checks set out in Schily's unread order.



DOERKSEN

Doerksen is the first witness at the inquest, which began in November, to testify about what happened in Lisa's room.

She told the jurors that at about 2 a.m., she hooked Lisa up by three leads to a corometric monitor, which would sound a shrill alarm if Lisa's heart or breathing fell below set levels.

But Doerksen said she shut off the monitor's breathing (apnea) alarm after its sensitive alarm sounded three times within a short period and might have prevented Lisa from sleeping. She did not make any record in Lisa's chart of turning off the alarm "because it is not our practice," and did not report her actions to her supervisor or a doctor.

Doerksen discovered Lisa was dead when she visited her room at about 7:20 a.m. and almost immediately observed that the entire monitor had been turned off.

The inquest continues today.

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