

Ruling against nurse upheld in Shore case

Sick Kids' former nursing chief should have probed girl's care at hospital, appeal panel says

BY HAROLD LEVY
STAFF REPORTER

An appeal board has upheld a ruling that a former Hospital for Sick Children chief nurse should have investigated the nursing care surrounding the death of 10-year-old Lisa Shore.

The Health Professions Appeal and Review Board also found that Jean Reeder should have investigated treatment provided by Lisa's nurses to other patients at the time.

Reeder was chief of nursing at Sick Kids when Lisa died unexpectedly at the hospital on Oct. 22, 1998, after being admitted for non-life-threatening recurrent leg pain.

An inquest was told her nurses failed to monitor Lisa for effects of the morphine she was given.

Reeder had asked the board to reverse a ruling of the complaints committee of the Ontario College of Nurses. That ruling said she should have conducted an investigation into nursing care Lisa received because she had



JEAN REEDER: Former Sick Kids chief nurse is in the U.S., writing a book on patient safety.

a professional obligation to take action once she became aware that nursing issues were involved.

The complaint was filed by Sharon Shore, Lisa's mother.

Reeder also wanted the review board, an independent body that reviews the decisions of self-regulating health professions, to overturn the committee's order that she be given verbal and written cautions.

Reeder argued the cautions were unwarranted because the hospital was unable to conduct its own investigation of nursing practices as staff mistakenly believed Lisa's medical chart had been turned over to the coroner's office.

But in a decision obtained by The Star, the three-member review panel headed by lawyer Irving Sherman said: "The board finds it disconcerting that the hospital did not initially realize that it had retained a copy of the nursing information it had provided to the coroner's office.

"While nursing issues relating to Lisa's death were apparent in January, 1999, Dr. Reeder stated that she did not become involved in the matter until February, 1999," the decision continued.

"The board finds that these factors should have reasonably aroused Dr. Reeder's index of suspicion that nursing practice issues may have contributed to Lisa's death."

The board also said the fact the coroner's office was already investigating didn't override Reeder's responsibility to gather "information relevant to the nursing practices surrounding Lisa's death in an attempt to improve nursing practices so as to avoid a repeat of the tragedy that befell the Shore family."

The complaints committee had also ruled that Reeder should have investi-

gated the nursing practices of Lisa's nurses, Ruth Doerksen and Anagaile Soriano, with respect to other patients on the ward on Oct. 21 and 22, 1998, as soon as Reeder became aware there were nursing issues in Lisa's case.

Although Reeder had argued that she could not have spoken with Doerksen and Soriano because their lawyer had instructed them to remain silent, the board ruled she could have obtained information "from other sources" relating to their nursing practices.

Last October, Doerksen and Soriano were charged with a joint count of criminal negligence causing Lisa's death.

Reached in Anacortes, Wash., where she conducts a consulting business, Reeder said: "I have not yet decided what I am going to do. However, since they upheld the written caution and the verbal caution, I would appreciate the opportunity to engage in direct discussion with the complaints

committee that still has yet to issue the verbal caution."

Reeder said although she did not wish to discuss the case, "I will, though, continue to speak on patient safety, and I'm finishing up a book on patient safety in surgical settings. This is what I'm consulting about now, believe it or not."

The board also rejected an application by nursing educator Mary Douglas to revoke a letter of caution from the college's complaints committee in response to Sharon Shore's complaint that inquest jurors had seen her coaching Doerksen with hand signals and body language during Doerksen's testimony.

The board said although it could not say why Douglas made the gestures and whether any witnesses were influenced, her conduct was "inappropriate" and the committee's decision to caution her was "reasonable."

Douglas' lawyer, Kate Hughes, said her client was out of the country and had not yet seen the decision.

HOLT RENFREW

LAST CALL