

Chief nurse resigns from Sick Kids

BY HAROLD LEVY
STAFF REPORTER

Dr. Janet Rush has quit her position as chief nurse of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, less than two years into her contract.

Rush took on the prestigious job in November, 2000 to replace former chief nurse Jean Reeder, who also left the hospital before the end of her contract.

A notice to employees from Alan Gayer, the hospital's president and chief executive officer, indicates that Rush "decided to leave the hospital effective July 31."

Hospital spokesperson Helen Simeon said she couldn't comment on Rush's reasons for leaving the hospital nor on the duration of the contract for confidentiality reasons.

Rush enjoys a prestigious reputation in Canadian nursing circles. Just six weeks before she submitted her resignation, the Canadian Nurses Association presented her with the Jeanne Mance Award, its highest recognition of individual merit.

According to the association, Rush received the award "for being at the forefront in practice in maternal, newborn and pediatric family-centred care, challenging all practitioners to consider the evidence and needs for change in practice even when those changes were

not popular or mainstream."

Rush, who did her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, had worked and taught in Hamilton hospitals for more than 20 years before being hired by the Hospital for Sick Children.

She took over the hospital's nursing staff at a time when staff morale was extremely low, following the death of 10-year-old Lisa Shore on a surgical recovery ward on Oct. 22, 1998. Lisa died less than 12 hours after her parents brought her to the hospital for relief from pain in her leg caused by a minor injury.

Nursing morale plummeted after a coroner's jury ruled her death was a "homicide," a neutral term meaning the killing of a person by another, and Toronto's homicide squad began a criminal investigation.

Two nurses were charged with criminal negligence causing Lisa's death on Oct. 25, 2001 — after Rush had taken over from Reeder — and are currently awaiting trial.

Simeon said Mary Jo Haddad, the hospital's vice-president in charge of medical services, who is also a nurse, will assume the position of acting chief nurse and that "no decision about a permanent replacement (for Rush) has been made."

Rush could not be reached for comment.

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