

Coroner's Jury Verdict & Recommendations **UPDATE**

INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF: Jeffrey Thomas Elliott

Details

Name(s) of Deceased:	Jeffrey Thomas Elliott
Date(s) of Death:	August 29, 2003
Place of Death:	Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto
Cause of Death:	Acute Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage due to Acute Hemorrhagic Gastropathy due to Septic Complications of Penetrating Hand Trauma
By what means:	Accidental
Age of Deceased:	20 years old
Location of Inquest:	Midland, Ontario
Date of Inquest	September 13, 2004 to September 24, 2004
Release date of verdict:	November 2004

Key Recommendations of Note for Hospitals

The jury made several recommendations. Although not all of the recommendations are directed at hospitals, they may still be of interest.

1. The jury recommended that:

- All hand wounds to be properly covered to avoid infection and checked daily until healing process is noted.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard evidence that all hand wounds should be properly covered, antibiotic cream placed on them and watched in a careful manner by the First Correctional medical staff including Doctors and Nurses. They felt this principle should be also shared with physicians and nurses treating prisoners in all other prisons in Ontario.

2. The jury recommended that:

- Food hatches to be closed at all times except for meal and pill passes.

Coroner's Comments: The jury request the Central North Correctional Centre and for all facilities with food hatches follow food hatch protocol and that the rules for foot hatch opening and closing should be followed by all correctional officers and inmates at the Central North Correctional Facility as well as at other Institutions.

Key Recommendations of Note for Hospitals (cont'd)

3. The jury recommended that:

- Medical Department at CNCC should review allotted hours for physician coverage to facilitate optimum inmate care.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard that the lack of medical coverage on Saturdays, Sundays and Statutory Holidays may have been a contributing factor into the death of Mr. Elliott. They felt that the medical department at Central North Correctional Centre specifically should review the hours in order to have a physician in the hospital 7 days a week. If 50 hours were the maximum allowable they felt it would be best to have a physician in the building for 7 hours per day, 7 days per week so that the most sickly inmates could be seen and followed on a daily basis and thus weekends and holidays would have medical coverage.

4. The jury recommended that:

- Upon inmate examination, attending nurse/physician should record findings immediately on note/memo pad to be transferred to appropriate health care record in a timely fashion.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard that timely completion of the health care record by nurses and physicians would improve medical care and improve the sharing of information between health care providers in the Central North Correctional Centre.

5. The jury recommended that:

- Medical facilities to establish protocol concerning essential medical records required upon transfer of patient.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard that Central North Correctional Centre should establish a protocol for sending appropriate records to referral centres in a timely method. This would involve communication with the different centres including Huronia District Hospital, Royal Victoria Hospital and other referral centres and after deliberations deciding which records should be routinely sent with the patient or faxed as soon as possible after the patient has been transferred to the referral centre. While it was recognized that each case may require specific records, it was felt by the Jury that a baseline package of records could be established for each referral institution.

6. The jury recommended that:

- MARS to be checked daily by Nurse in Charge regarding date, time and proper dosage of medication in Medical Unit.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard that in the Medical Unit of Central North Correctional Centre with only sixteen patients, it would be very reasonable for the Charge Nurse to check the Medicine Administration Record Sheet (MARS) on a daily basis for the sixteen patients in that unit in order to be certain that the proper medicine at the proper dosage had been administered to each patient in the Medical Unit of the Central North Correctional Centre.

7. The jury recommended that:

- Medical Staff to ensure proper hygiene of inmates when in Medical Unit.

Coroner's Comments: While the jury heard that jails by their nature are not as sterile as hospitals, it was felt that the medical staff and the nursing staff of the Central North Correctional Centre should ensure proper hygiene of inmates while they are in the medical unit and most particularly those inmates who have sustained wounds.

Key Recommendations of Note for Hospitals (cont'd)

8. The jury recommended that:

- Outside consulting physician to be made aware of Central North Correctional Centre's medical capabilities regarding patient care.

Coroner's Comments: It was felt that the outside physicians in Barrie, Midland and other hospitals should be made aware of the medical capacity of Central North Correctional Centre in terms of what they can offer for patient care. It was their feeling that an educational program with the local referral hospitals could be undertaken and that a hand out describing the Central North Correction Centre's medical capacity could be sent with patients who are referred outside of the Huronia District Hospital.

9. The jury recommended that:

- As per Dr. Paul Bimhammer's recommendation:
 - a) "That nursing staff at Central North Correctional Centre review the signs and symptoms of soft tissue infection."
 - b) "That physicians at Central North Correctional Centre review the management of hand infections."
 - c) "That Central North Correctional Centre review its policies for accepting post-operative patients who have acute surgical emergencies. The management of these patients should be that they remain as patients at the treating hospital until it is their clinical situation has stabilized and does not require significant active treatment."
 - d) "That this report and its discussion be distributed to be involved Physicians so that they may review issues of management of severe hand infections, the long term use of intravenous antibiotics as well as the need for appropriate documentation."

Coroner's Comments: This is self explanatory, it was felt that education of the nursing and medical staff in terms of hand infections should be undertaken both at the Central North Correctional Centre and also at the upcoming meeting of the Prison Physician's Association that one of the topics for education at this meeting be the management of wound care and specifically of hand wound care. They also felt that this case should be reviewed by the physicians of the Central North Correctional Centre so that they themselves may review the management of severe hand infections and that a plastic surgeon specifically review the management of hand infections as well as the long term use of intravenous antibiotics and the need for appropriate documentation.

10. The jury recommended that:

- As per Dr. Paul Bimhammer's recommendation, that the case of Jeffrey Elliott be published in a widely distributed Medical Journal such as the College of Physician and Surgeon's of Ontario Journal.

Coroner's Comments: The jury heard evidence that the publication of certain aspects of the case of Jeffrey Elliott in a widely distributed medical journal such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario would be helpful not only to prison physicians but to all physicians. Although certain parts of this case are not clear, there are certain aspects of this case that need to be shared with practicing physicians both in the jail population and in the general population and specifically issues of wound care and antibiotic use be reviewed with a wide range of physicians through an educational journal.

Key Recommendations of Note for Hospitals (cont'd)

11. The jury recommended that:

- Central North Correctional Centre to educate cleaning staff on the necessity of proper sanitation procedures.

Coroner's Comments: It was felt that the Central North Correctional Centre cleaning staff have further education as to the necessity of proper sanitation procedures in the medical area.

Summary

Jeffrey Elliott was a 20 year old man who was an inmate at the Central North Correctional Centre in August 2003. He sustained a small cut to his hand while in custody. While the exact circumstances of receiving the cut were not clear, it is clear that the cut was given medical attention, sutured with 2 sutures at the Medical Unit of the Central North Correctional Centre, and cared for over several days when a significant infection occurred. Mr. Elliott was referred to a plastic surgeon at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie who operated on Mr. Elliott's hand on two occasions as an outpatient. Mr. Elliott was then re-admitted for a period of time as an inpatient and then discharged to Central North Correctional Centre. After spending a few more days at the Central North Correctional Centre receiving wound care as well as ongoing intravenous antibiotics, Mr. Elliott deteriorated and was rushed to Huronia District Hospital. Mr. Elliott spent 24 hours at this facility and eventually was intubated, ventilated and flown out by air ambulance to Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto on August 27, 2003. He was extremely sick and in shock. At Mount Sinai Hospital, Mr. Elliott underwent further treatment and surgery. He died on August 29, 2003. The inquest lasted 8 days and heard from 39 witnesses. There were 89 exhibits put into evidence. The jury went on to deliberate for 26 hours before rendering their verdict.

Contact

The "Coroner's Jury Verdict & Recommendations" highlights inquests of interest to hospitals. These inquests either relate to deaths in hospital or the coroner's jury, in these inquests, have made recommendations directed at hospitals. Although coroner's jury recommendations are not legally binding, hospitals may wish to review and consider them, as may be appropriate. For further details or a full copy of the verdict, please contact Cyrelle Muskat at (416) 205-1378 or cmuskat@oha.com.