

Washington County, Pennsylvania

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November 15, 1974

RELEASE OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF PAUL JENKINS.

Having made an inquiry into the death of Paul Jenkins which occurred November 13, 1974 at the Western State School and Hospital, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania at approximately 8:30 P. M., I find that the cause of death was aspiration due to food particles lodged in the larynx.

From the testimony received at the State Hospital on November 14, 1974 by the administration and employees, the following opinions and recommendations are arrived at from this testimony by the Coroner of Washington County, Farrell Jackson:

1. Lack of sufficient personnel to render the proper service and care due to the patients confined in the Western State School and Hospital. This is based on the testimony that only three attendants were involved with 37 patients; two were trained and one had only been employed for one month without training. The structure of these 37 patients required some to be fed personally by the attendants, some who fed themselves, and all required strict attention as to what they were doing at the time of eating. This, in the opinion of the Coroner, is an impossible feat for the three employees to do and provide the care and full protection that each patient needed.
2. The administrator, Mr. Hiltner, testified to the rules of the institution in respect to feeding. The rule is that patients who are hand feet should have an attendant there while they are consuming their meal. When the question was asked, did the attendant do this in this particular case, they replied in the negative because of the other 36 patients they were attending and, therefore, could not carry out the rule in full enforcement. Opinion of the Coroner is that this rule is only feasible to be carried out if there is enough employees employed to have the time to do so.
3. Dietary procedure is lacking in a complete check before serving

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to the patients that the assigned food is for the patient that is receiving it and it complies completely with the request of the doctor, or the physician, who has requested it. It is the opinion of the Coroner that this procedure should be looked into immediately, that all trays should be marked with names and numbers of patients and any special feeding procedure that is ordered by the doctor for the patient should be known in full by the supervisor of the dietary department and any special requests should be passed on to those who are serving the patients so no mistake is made.

RECOMMENDATIONS to the Western State School and Hospital:

1. That immediately, action be taken to hire and provide properly trained employees to give the service and care and protection that is needed at all times with this type of patient.
2. The dietary department be implemented in providing the information needed for each patient's meal to the employee as ordered by the physician.

OPINION: It is the opinion of the Coroner of Washington County, Farrell Jackson, that the testimony of this investigation finds no criminal neglect on the part of employees or the administration, but certainly, without question, finds, as I stated previously, the lack of personnel to carry out the rules and the care and protection of these patients is the contributing part directly to this death. Unfortunately, this is not the only death that has occurred due to the above reasons.

In July 20, 1974 Mark Leonard, age 13, came to his death by drowning in an unfenced reservoir due to, again, not enough personnel to pay full attention to all they were assigned to them and this young man was able to stray away and fall into the reservoir.

These two tragic deaths, under similar circumstances of not enough personnel, leaves this office with the responsibility of reporting these incidents to the State Government, namely Governor Shapp, to send an investigating team to the Western State School and Hospital for the purpose of investigating these charges and providing the personnel that is needed as quickly as possible.

Respectfully submitted

Farrell Jackson
Farrell Jackson, Coroner

FJ:jeh