

MEDIA RELEASE

Recommendations Following the Coroner's Inquest into the Death of Steve Mesic

HAMILTON, ON, June 16, 2014 – The tragic death of Steve Mesic has had a significant impact on our organization and on our community as a whole. “I want to express my sincere condolences to Ms. Dorr, her son, Dominic, and to the family of Mr. Mesic for their loss,” said Dr. David Higgins, President of St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton. “It is clear that he was a bright light in the lives of many, and I know he is greatly missed.”

Though a Quality of Care review of Mr. Mesic’s clinical assessment in the days and hours leading up to June 7, 2013 showed no evidence he intended to take his own life after leaving hospital, this inquest has given St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton an opportunity to look through a wider lens at the policies and processes we have in place in our mental health program. As a means of enhancing care, St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton has submitted its own recommendations to the Crown and Counsel for its consideration.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- A. The Hospital should review its patient observation process, and monitor staff adherence to this process including the use of the electronic documentation device (Tough Book), in the Mental Health and Addiction Program.**
- B. The Hospital should review its policy and procedures for management of Off Ward Passes and how that Policy is applied in the Mental Health and Addiction Program.**

The jury considered these recommendations, as well as recommendations put forward by Hamilton Police Service and the family of Mr. Mesic. After careful consideration of all evidence, recommendations and testimony, the jury returned with the following recommendations for St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton:

1. We recommend that St. Joseph’s Hospital review its client observation process, and monitor staff adherence to this process including the use of electronic documentation device (Tough Book), in the Mental Health and Addiction Program. We suggest that the hospital consider enhanced identification measures such as the possibility of using arm band barcode scanning system or including patient photos in client profiles to facilitate accurate observations, increase meaningful interactions between staff and clients and provide precise documentation of client locations.
2. We recommend that St. Joseph’s Hospital develop a specific policy for the Mental Health and Addiction Program in order to provide direction to staff in the management of “Off Ward Passes” and for voluntary clients who do not return, and that this program be reviewed by staff and doctors annually.
3. We recommend that St. Joseph’s Hospital standardize the transfer of primary responsibility between physicians and that this information be included as part of the permanent client record.
4. We recommend that where family involvement is accepted by the client, that St. Joseph’s Mental Health and Addiction Program increase communication with the family as to the plan of care prior to the expiration or change of a “Form 1” and/or “Form 3”.

Continuous improvement is something St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamiltons strive for every day in our mental health and addiction program. As such, we will take the thoughtful and earnest recommendations provided by the jury and carefully consider how to implement them within our vision of delivering transformational mental health and addiction care to our patients and for our community.

"As a regional leader, we will learn from this tragedy," said Dr. Higgins. "It is my great hope that systemically we can learn from this event, and together we can work to improve the lives, health and experiences of those who live with mental illness and addiction."

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For a full list of the recommendations, please visit: www.stjoes.ca

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton is the regional leader in providing care for those living with mental illness and addiction, and is committed to eradicating stigma and promoting the fullest recovery for every person. As an organization, its excellence is based on quality of care provided to patients, staff expertise, the innovative nature of its programs and the pioneering quality of its research.