

**No Blame – No Shame???**

**A CRY FOR  
DISCLOSURE AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Valli Elmgren, RO, RCLP  
October 23, 2008  
Halifax 8 Canadian Patient Safety Symposium

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**“And as bad as it was for the individual and the family of Ms. Poff, I mean the **staff members involved suffered** through this, the entire staff, the management, this individual was a well loved resident of our facility and for a loss to take place... I think you know you would be sadly **underestimating the impact that it had on our care providers** who have had to go back into that facility **to earn their livelihood** day in and day out and interact with others.”**

*Mr. Jim Hornell, CEO of the Cypress Health Region on the John Gormley Live radio talk show May 31, 2007.*

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**“Time to put it behind us and move on.”**

**“We’ve done our part.”**

**“Not about blaming and shaming.”**

**“About learning about it and moving on.”**

**“We need... to investigate and learn from mistakes to prevent similar incidents from occurring...”**

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SIMILAR "INCIDENTS"	
#1	
Jennie Nelson	Diane Poff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90 year old Alzheimer's patient in Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home, Edmonton, AB.</li> <li>January 4, 2004 lowered into hot water and suffered 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns that peeled the skin off her legs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51 year old Encephalitis patient in Palliser Regional Hospital, Swift Current, SK.</li> <li>August 12, 2005 put into scalding hot water and suffered 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns to back, pelvic area, leg and foot.</li> </ul>

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SIMILAR "INCIDENTS"	
#1	
Jennie Nelson	Diane Poff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorrect bathing equipment used – bathtub did not regulate temperature and gauges believed inaccurate.</li> <li>Died nine days later on January 11, 2004. Burns were cause of death (Dr. Bernard Bannach, Ass. Chief Medical Examiner).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dangerous taps used – they had been broken since January and gauges believed inaccurate.</li> <li>Died 5 days later on August 17, 2005. Death caused by complications of thermal burns (Robert Paterson, Coroner).</li> </ul>

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SIMILAR "INCIDENTS"	
#1	
Jennie Nelson	Diane Poff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both care attendants were still employed by the lodge almost 2 years later.</li> <li>No charges laid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both aids are still employed by the nursing home.</li> <li>No charges laid.</li> </ul>

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**SIMILAR "INCIDENTS"**

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**WOODLAND SCHOOL**                      **DIANE POFF**

#2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "The Code of Silence"</li><li>• Moved personnel around rather than terminating.</li><li>• Scalding hot or freezing cold bath water.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Gag Order</li><li>• Moved nurses aid from 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor after complaints by patients.</li><li>• Scalding hot bath water / freezing cold?</li></ul>
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**SIMILAR "INCIDENTS"**

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**ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL**                      **DIANE POFF**

#3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Icy whirlpool baths.</li><li>• Known/posted faulty equipment.</li><li>• "Nothing gets fixed year after year."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uncontrolled bath water.</li><li>• Known faulty equipment.</li><li>• Delays in repairing equipment – taps broken since January '05.</li></ul>
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**"Adverse events, critical incidents, near misses, and accidents are part of the business of health care."**

*Mr. Jim Hornell, CEO of the Cypress Health Region for the Prairie Post, Friday May 11, 2007.*

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*Basic message of a  
WORKSAFE Saskatchewan Commercial*

If we say these things happen, then we are saying they are not preventable, and if they are not preventable, then they are acceptable. These things do **NOT** just happen. It is **NOT** acceptable.

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**ACCOUNTABLE – subject to the obligation to report, explain, or justify something; responsible; answerable.**

Dictionary.com unabridged v 1.1

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**“NO BLAME, NO SHAME”  
=  
NO ACCOUNTABILITY**

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*No consequences or accountability for...*

1. Scalding and death of Diane.
2. Broken equipment left unrepaired.
3. Missing evidence – bath instructions & faulty taps.
4. November 16, 2005 letter from Cypress Health Region.

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“If you would like the Cypress Health Region to **give consideration to the matter**, it would be of assistance if you would **outline on what basis your request is being made and provide details of, and supporting documentation for, these expenses**. With this information, the region **could** then consider your request. **No further commitment to you** can be made at this time...”

*Letter to the Poff family from the Cypress Health Region, dated November 16, 2005*

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*No consequences or accountability for...*

1. Scalding and death of Diane.
2. Broken equipment left unrepaired.
3. Missing evidence – bath instructions & faulty taps.
4. November 16, 2005 letter from Cypress Health Region.
5. Allegations by C.H.R. legal counsel of collaboration with R.C.M.P.

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“If we have, I guess, a culture in our organization that says if something goes wrong, to be punished right away, then we’re going to have people that are going to hide things that go wrong. ‘I’m going to cover it up’, and that’s not what we’re about.”  
*Mr. Jim Hornell, CEO of Cypress Health Region*

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**...but that’s EXACTLY what they did!**

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