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Doctor suspended for girl's death

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A doctor who allegedly gave a lethal injection to a dying child at the University of California Medical Center reportedly has been suspended for 90 days with pay.

The three nurses who reported him were suspended for six weeks without pay, according to Elliot Peters, an attorney for one of them. Peters deemed the action against the nurses unfair, and said he will seek an appeal.

"All three nurses received six weeks suspensions without pay," Peters said. "My understanding is, the doctor who was responsible only had some privileges suspended for 90 days, like the ability to see patients at the hospital."

"Our position is, the people who reported the matter are being disciplined more harshly than the person who was responsible for it," he said.

UC Medical Center officials said they have concluded an internal investigation of the alleged mercy killing last fall during which the 9-year-old girl died.

"Appropriate disciplinary action" was taken, said university officials, who refused to comment on specifics or release any names, citing confidentiality laws.

"Any one of the individuals who disagrees with the decision has appeal rights through university grievance procedures or through collective bargaining agreements," said Corinna Kaarlela, a spokeswoman for the university.

The alleged mercy killing occurred last fall when the girl began suffering declining health after undergoing surgery at the center.

According to published accounts, the girl's mother and physician agreed to cut off support systems that kept the child alive. The girl, however, did not die. With the consent of the mother, the doctor, a member of the hospital teaching staff, then injected the child.

The case prompted inquiries from the city's Medical Examiner's office, which said no decision has been made on whether any laws were broken.

Supreme Court hears drug test case

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Oregon school district and the Clinton administration urged the Supreme Court Tuesday to allow mandatory drug tests of all student athletes in schools where drug use is a problem.

But an Oregon teen-ager's lawyer said such drug-testing violates the privacy rights of public school students.

"This is being compelled by the government. They're watching you do it. They're taking your urine. They're testing it to see what secrets are therein," argued Portland lawyer Thomas Christ as his 15-year-old client, James Acton, watched from the courtroom audience.

But Timothy Volpert, the school district's lawyer, said allowing drug tests of only those students actually suspected of using drugs would not have the same deterrent effect as random tests.

"If there's a reasonable belief of ... drug use in the schools, random drug-testing should be allowed," he said.

In Vernonia, Volpert said, it was suspected that junior high athletes were leaders in the drug culture.

Justice Department lawyer Richard Seamon said it is less intrusive to impose such a testing requirement for student athletes because of the "voluntary, extracurricular nature" of school sports.

All three lawyers were subjected to numerous interruptions from the bench. Of the court's nine members, only Justice Clarence Thomas asked no questions.

The discussion turned rather basic at times.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist talked about boys' locker rooms as not very private places because of "guys walking

around naked."

Justice Stephen G. Breyer's pressing Christ to admit that urinating "isn't really a tremendously private thing" led the lawyer to say, "We all urinate. That has to be conceded."

When Christ added, "In fact, I may do so here," the courtroom — the justices included — erupted in laughter.

But the justices, most notably Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, clearly saw nothing funny about kids using drugs.

"I'm talking about solving the problems of drugs in the schools," Kennedy said at one point, referring to "a nationwide drug problem in the schools."

The justices are expected to decide by late June whether random testing is a constitutionally acceptable way to fight that problem.

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