

Confirmed Investigation Launched Amid Reported Hospital Death



Oregon police confirm investigation into medication theft amid report hospital patients died.

Former Employee Believed to had Stolen Medication

(AP) — Authorities are investigating the theft of medication prescribed to patients at a southern Oregon hospital, police and state medical officials confirmed, following a local news report that two people died and others were sickened after a nurse replaced fentanyl intravenous drips with tap water.

Officials at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford reported to police early last month that they believed a former employee had stolen medication, Medford Police Lt. Geoff Kirkpatrick said in a statement.

“There was concern that this behavior resulted in adverse

patient care, though the extent of the impact on those patients is yet to be determined,” the statement said.

In a phone interview, Kirkpatrick declined to confirm whether deaths resulted from the medication theft or tampering, saying, “We’re investigating whether or not that behavior led to adverse patient care, which could be death, could be all sorts of other forms or things. ... We don’t know that that resulted in deaths.” The police statement said the department received numerous calls from individuals asking if they or a family member might have been affected. Asante told police it had identified any patients who were and has notified or is notifying them or their families, the department said.

Neither the hospital nor police would provide further information, and there were no indications an arrest had been made.

“We were distressed to learn of this issue,” Asante said in a statement. “We reported it to

law enforcement and are working closely with them.”

The Oregon Health Authority said Wednesday in a statement that it was aware of reports of an Asante nurse “alleged to have tampered with pharmaceutical fentanyl used to treat severe pain and introduced tap water in patients’ intravenous lines.” It also confirmed it was investigating “reports that the incidents led to health care-associated infections that severely injured, and may have caused the deaths of, several patients.”

The Rogue Valley Times reported this week that the families of two patients — 36-year-old Samuel Allison, who died in November 2022, and 74-year-old Barry Samsten, who died in July — said hospital officials notified them that the deaths were due to infections resulting from their pain medication being replaced with non-sterile tap water.

Relatives of Allison and Samsten did not immediately respond to interview requests from The Associated Press.



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