

## Chiropractic treatment needs safety review: jury

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The death of an Ontario woman who had her neck adjusted by a chiropractor was an accident, but more information is needed about the treatment's possible dangers, a coroner's jury ruled Friday.

Lana Dale Lewis died of a stroke in 1996, 17 days after having her neck adjusted by Toronto chiropractor Philip Emanuele. It was the second stroke she had suffered in that period of time.

The Ontario coroner's inquest was called to determine if the strokes were related to the neck manipulation.

Jurors in such cases are never asked to find blame, only the cause of death. Unless it's a suicide or homicide, the options are generally natural, accidental or undetermined.

Since jurors did not conclude that the death was natural or undetermined, the ruling of an "accident" means they found a relationship between the neck manipulation and the stroke, according to Amani Oakley, the Lewis's family lawyer.

"This is a complete and utter victory," said Oakley.

The lawyer had argued that an upper neck manipulation led to the 45-year-old woman's death.

A lawyer for the Canadian Chiropractic Association and the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College called the outcome disappointing.

"It represents a massive miscarriage of justice," said Tim Danson. "We think the ruling is perverse."

Danson, who plans to appeal the decision, told CBC Newsworld that he's upset by the list of recommendations submitted by the jury.

The 17 recommendations for avoiding future deaths include further study of the link, "if any," between neck manipulation and strokes, and the creation of a database of all spinal manipulations performed in the province.

The jury also recommended chiropractors and doctors get "written and informed consent" from the patient before proceeding with the treatment.

The Canadian Chiropractic Association said the death had nothing to do with the treatment, which Lewis was receiving for migraine headaches.

But dozens of neurologists signed a letter in February 2002 saying blood vessels can tear if the neck is rotated improperly.

Critics of the treatment have warned that it could trigger strokes by damaging the lining of an artery supplying blood to the brain.

Lawyers representing the chiropractic profession argued that Lewis was in poor health. She was a heavy drinker and smoker, had high blood pressure, severe headaches and a weight problem.