



# FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: Coroner Judgement of Inquiry and Inquest Inquisition and Recommendations

Department of Justice, Legal Services  
Yukon Coroners Service  
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Yukon Coroners Service: Judgement of Inquiry into the death of: Ronald Dennis Itsi

Coroner Investigative File No.: 4520201441

Name: Ronald Dennis Itsi Date of Birth: 1969/12/30 Date of Death: 2014/12/08  
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: Copper Ridge Place Street Address Whitehorse Province/Territory Y1A 2C6 Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: First Nations Location of Death: 21 Wann Road, Unit 5, Whitehorse

## Cause of Death

Urinary Tract Infection due to a Complication of Remote Cervical Spinal Cord Injury. Contributing Factor: Acute Alcohol and Citalopram Toxicity.

## Manner of Death

Accidental

## Autopsy Findings

An autopsy was performed at Vancouver General Hospital on December 10, 2014.

The pathologist noted that there was an indwelling suprapubic catheter in situ and that the drainage bag was full and tense containing blood-stained slightly turbid urine. There were quite prominent acute and chronic inflammatory changes to the urinary bladder and prostate gland, in keeping with an active urinary tract infection.

A neuropathologist examined the brain and spinal cord and identified ischemic-hypoxic encephalopathy. This is evolving damage to the cells of the brain (due to impaired blood and/or oxygen) which is believed to have been a gradual process (from sepsis and/or drug toxicity) rather than a sudden event (such as a seizure).

*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (a bacterial organism) was cultured from samples of both urine and heart blood: suggestive of systemic infection (urosepsis).

There was also localized fresh bleeding under the arachnoid membrane covering the surface of the brain which was also likely a terminal event secondary to the evolving ischemic-hypoxic encephalopathy.

## Toxicological Findings

Toxicology revealed a blood alcohol level of .20% and ocular fluid (vitreous) alcohol level of .22%. Citalopram, a prescription medication used to treat depression was detected within a range where toxic effects have been reported. Postmortem toxicology levels of citalopram are potentially very unreliable due to postmortem redistribution. Toxicology testing also detected estimated therapeutic levels gabapentin, Nortriptyline, and cyclobenzaprine.

### Circumstances of Death

In 2011, Ronald Dennis Itsi sustained an injury to his cervical spinal cord which resulted in quadriplegia. Mr. Itsi had an indwelling suprapubic catheter to drain urine into an attached drainage bag. He also had a documented history of multiple recurrent urinary tract infections. Mr. Itsi was a resident of Copper Ridge Place in Whitehorse, Yukon. On December 7, 2014 at 18:06hrs, Mr. Itsi signed himself out of Copper Ridge Place to visit with friends in Whitehorse. His intention was to return to Copper Ridge Place that evening. In the evening on December 7, 2014 several calls were made to taxi companies in the Whitehorse area to request a wheelchair accessible taxi so Mr. Itsi could return to Copper Ridge Place. In order to request a wheelchair accessible taxi on December 7, 2014, a person would have had to make the arrangements in advance and pay a premium for the service. This service is offered by contractor through a local taxi company and the hours of availability are inconsistent and somewhat unreliable. There were no wheelchair accessible taxis available that night, so Mr. Itsi could not return home to Copper Ridge Place. At approximately 09:30hrs on December 8, 2014, Mr. Itsi was found cold and unresponsive - still seated in his wheelchair.

### Significant Factors/Conclusions

Mr. Itsi had an indwelling suprapubic catheter and a history of multiple subsequent urinary tract infections. Urinary tract infections are a known complication of indwelling suprapubic catheters. A bacterial organism which is recognized to be a common cause of urinary tract infections was cultured in both the urine and in the heart blood. This finding is consistent with a systemic infection (urosepsis). Mr. Itsi was not able to return to Copper Ridge Place on December 7, 2014 because there was no wheelchair accessible taxi available in Whitehorse.

Copper Ridge Place is staffed with highly qualified nursing personnel who have experience in recognizing and treating urinary tract infections. If Mr. Itsi had been able to return to Copper Ridge Place and the nursing staff had identified the signs/symptoms of a urinary tract infection, they would have contacted the physician. A urine sample would have been collected for culture and sensitivity and the physician would have likely ordered an antibiotic. Urinary tract infections are usually treated with antibiotics as prescribed by a physician. It is unknown whether or not his return to Copper Ridge Place that evening would have irrefutably changed the outcome of this case.

### Recommendations

No recommendations

  
Signature, Chief Coroner

Whitehorse, Yukon

Province/Territory

May 22, 2015

Date

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