

**CYRIL H. WECHT, M.D., J.D.**

**WEST PENN BUILDING**

**14 WOOD STREET**

**PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15222**

**(412) 281-9090**

**FAX (412) 261-3650**

**ANATOMIC, CLINICAL, AND FORENSIC PATHOLOGY  
LEGAL MEDICINE**

July 18, 2002

David K. Dalition, Esq.  
1006 Avery Court  
Vienna, Virginia 22180

Dear Mr. Dalition:

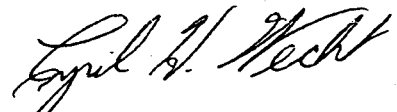
I believe you will be interested in the enclosed article which refers to your sister's death.

What is the status of this matter? Is there anything further you would like me to do at this time?

I shall look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,



Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.

CHW/km



# SCIENTIFIC SLEUTHING REVIEW

The Many Uses of the Forensic Sciences

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## Modern Methods of Poisoning From Arsenic to Fentanyl

By James E. Starrs,  
Senior Co-Editor  
Prof. of Law & Forensic Sciences  
The George Washington Univ.

The time of infamous poisoners like Catherine de Medici and Marchioness de Brinvilliers is long past. Arsenic was often their poison of choice, giving it the dubious distinction of being known as the "king of poisons." Its availability, its toxicity and the difficulty of detecting it made it the perfect fit for homicidal poisoners. But no more.

In today's world of poisons and poisoners the selection among lethal poisons knows no bounds. In Houston, Texas in 1998 a disabled woman residing in a group home was literally burned to death by bleach that a caretaker had carelessly thrown in a hallway where the deceased woman had fallen. And in February of 2000, Linda Adalian collapsed and died at the Fresno (California) Community Hospital. Two autopsies and eleven months later Ms. Adalian's death has now been attributed to selenium poisoning. The trace element selenium is found in many things from vitamin supplements to firearms manufacturing. It is also found in plentiful supply in the soil of farming states like North Dakota where it is fatal to animals who chew the vegetation growing in the selenium laden soil.



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Selenium has featured in other dramatic and newsworthy criminal enterprises as well. California's Richard K. Overton was said to have attempted to kill his third wife with a cup of coffee laced with it. And, indeed, would you believe that CSI (crime scene investigation) has picked up the thread of selenium and used it in one of its television episodes.

But there are a myriad of other poisons out there, just waiting to be used with homicidal intent. Fentanyl (duragesic) is one of them. And it has not been without its devotees among those bent on murder.

Lately Kathleen Holey of St. Johns, Michigan has been accused of assisting her son Patrick to commit suicide with fentanyl. Dr. Jack Kevorkian was not involved, according to reports in the New York Times on April 24, 2002.

And in the Fredericksburg, Virginia area Dr. Bernard Member has been charged with killing his ex-wife with fentanyl transdermal patches which the victim applied to her back in excessive amounts in order to ease her pain. Unfortunately the overdose also sent her out of this world.

### The Rose Petal Murder Case

But the case of all cases of this ilk is the rose petal murder case now in the limelight in San Diego, California.

It is not Denmark, just San Diego, California. It is not Hamlet, just a contemporary tragedy. But there is a malefic aroma regularly being reported as emanating from the San Diego Medical Examiner's Office which, with each ensuing report, seems to become more stingingly acrid.

The order in which these disorders and disharmonies in the San Diego Medical Examiner's Office came to public notice is of little moment, except for the fact that secrecy seems to prevail, as it often does when institutions, governmental or otherwise come under the magnifier of public criticism.

### The Players

The names of the newsworthy dramatic personae (cast of characters) are worthy (sic) of mention. There is toxicologist Kristen Rossum, 24, and her supervisor, Michael D. Robertson, 31, and the Rossum's cuckolded husband, Gregory de Villers, 26, a biologist in private employment. These three, Rossum, Robertson and de Villers are the principal actors in the drama now unfolding in San Diego. It is not just another love triangle with the husband, de Villers, coming up short due to his death from poisoning. The plot, as the Bard did say, "thickens."

A subplot, bulking large in this drama, involves the San Diego Medical Examiner's Office from ship to shore. Dr. Harry J. Bonnell, the office's chief deputy medical examiner, whose \$149,000 salary was upended by his sacking, faced well-publicized charges of negligence and incompetence in conducting autopsies. Lately it has come to light during courtroom testimony on

the murder charges against Rossum for killing her husband, that drug evidence at the M.E.'s office has been mishandled in a disgracefully unprofessional manner. This alleged failure to monitor and to store drugs in a prudent and conscientious way included both prescription and illegal drugs from death scenes as well as exemplars for use as standards in drug testing.

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James E. Starrs  
Charles R. Midkiff  
senior editors

David Benjamin PhD  
George C. Stephens, PhD  
contributing editors

Barbara A. Murillo  
editor

Matthew Mantel  
Brett Treese  
Seamus na Realta  
writers

Ashley Williams  
Tom Spitzer  
artwork

Address all correspondence and subscriptions to:

SCIENTIFIC SLEUTHING  
c/o Prof. James E. Starrs  
The GWU National Law Center  
Washington, DC 20052  
FAX: 202/994-9446

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