

# Expert: Poison killed County native

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A former San Carlos resident who collapsed and died last year while on an outing with her four children in Fresno died of acute selenium poisoning, according to a toxicologist.

Linda Adanalian, who grew up on the Peninsula and was the daughter of San Carlos residents George and Jane Dalitton, collapsed Feb. 11, 2000 outside the Selland Arena in Fresno after going to an ice show with her children and died hours later at Community Medical Center-Fresno.

She complained of chest pains, said she couldn't breathe and passed out.

After her death, the Fresno County Coroner's Office determined no cause for Adanalian's sudden death but called it suspicious.

A report done by the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. and interpreted by Henry Spiller, director of the Kentucky Regional Poison Center in Louisville, adds to the suspicion.

Spiller said the 37-year-old Adanalian had well over 11 times the natural level of selenium usually found in the human body.

"To get these kinds of levels of selenium in her system, it wasn't accidental," said Spiller, who was paid by Adanalian's parents to interpret the results. "In my opinion she died of selenium poisoning."

He said she had all the classic symptoms of acute selenium poisoning — rapid cardiovascular collapse and profound congestion of the lungs.

Selenium is found naturally in the body but only in small amounts. Chronic exposure to high levels of selenium over a period of time causes symptoms such as hair and fingernail loss and cracking of the skin — symptoms Adanalian never had.

That's why Spiller believes Adanalian ingested it all at once instead of over a period of time.

"If you have chronic selenium poisoning, there's plenty of time for it to lay down in your hair, but if it's acute there's no time for it to get into the hair," he said.

Selenium poisoning is very rare, Spiller said. He only knows of eight such deaths reported in the entire world.

Eric Pfeifer, a forensic pathologist for the Mayo Clinic who performed tests on the tissue samples from Adanalian's exhumed body, agreed that she died of acute selenium poisoning.

He said selenium is found in such things as herbal supplements, diet pills and gunpowder.

Adanalian's husband Mike did suggest that she had been taking diet pills. But the family told Pfeifer the pills did not have selenium in them.

But Spiller's conclusions aren't consistent with blood taken the day after Adanalian's death which showed a selenium level far below the toxic levels, according to in-

formation obtained by the Fresno Bee from the Fresno County Coroner's Office.

That's why the coroner's office is having its own team of experts examine the information provided by Spiller, Coroner David Hadden said.

"Some of these figures just aren't consistent with what we have," Hadden said. "It's going to take some time to go over these results."

At the family's request, police began an investigation after her death but found nothing suspicious. Now police are waiting for results from the coroner's office.

There have been rumors that Adanalian's estranged husband Mike had something to do with her death. In fact, last February, on the anniversary of her death, he held a press conference to dispel rumors that he says were started by his in-laws.

Much of the speculation on how Adanalian died comes from a Web site established by the family, [www.whathappenedtolinda.com](http://www.whathappenedtolinda.com). The site is continually updated with new theories.

While George and Jane Dalitton did not want to be quoted, their attorney Allan Melikian said they are convinced their daughter was poisoned.

"I don't think she poisoned herself. I don't think it was a suicide," he said. "But I don't want to speculate on how she was poisoned. The important thing right now is at least the family knows how she died."

Neither Mike Adanalian nor his attorney, Warren Paboojian, could be reached at press time.



Adanalian

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