Analysis of causes that led to baby Ron James Douglas'cardiopulmonary arrest, bleeding (intracranial, retinal, and pulmonary), and rib fracture

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Abstract

Ron James Douglas was 16 weeks old when he choked after being fed and suffered from cardiopulmonary arrest. The paramedics resuscitated him and took him to a hospital. He was pronounced dead at about 25 hours following admission. An autopsy was performed and the medical examiner (ME) found subdural, subarachnoid, and retinal bleeding and an acute rib fracture of the left anterolateral 6th rib. The ME alleged that Ron's death was caused by blunt trauma to the head and trunk. Ron's father was accused of killing his son.

My investigation reveals that Ron had a serum calcium level of 6.2 mg/dL and suffered from a severe hypocalcemia. Hypocalcaemia in children has caused seizures, respiratory disorders, laryngospasm, and/or severe cardiac disorders which resulted in sudden death. Hypocalcemia is the likely cause of Ron's choking and cardiopulmonary arrest. Ron was born 11 weeks premature and developed hyperphosphatemia at 39 days following birth. The likely causes of Ron's hypocalcemia are hypoparathyroidism and hyperphosphatemia. He also developed hemolytic anemia and his thymus was involuted. His hemoglobin level and hematocrit value were 6.2 g/dL and 19.4%, respectively.

Ron's intracranial bleeding developed following admission to the hospital and the likely causes of his bleeding are acute liver injury, treatment with epinephrine, and disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC). In addition, severe anemia contributed to his retinal bleeding. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is the likely cause of Ron's rib fracture. The clinical and the medical studies described in this report do not support the ME's allegation that Ron was killed by blunt trauma.

Keywords: blunt trauma; brain edema; cardiopulmonary resuscitation; cardiopulmonary arrest; disseminated intravascular coagulation; hypocalcemia; hyperphosphatemia; jaundice; involuted thymus; premature infant; pulmonary bleeding; respiratory distress syndrome; retinal bleeding; rib fracture; subdural bleeding; subarachnoid bleeding;

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