

The doctor's apology

The following is a written statement by former pathologist Dr. Charles Smith that was read by his lawyer, Niels Ortved, on Nov 12, 2007, at the opening of a judicial inquiry in Toronto. Smith worked at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children for 24 years, conducting more than 1,000 child autopsies before he resigned in 2005. The inquiry was called after a formal review of 45 of Smith's autopsies found he made questionable conclusions of foul play in 20 of the cases. Of those, 12 resulted in criminal convictions and one in a finding of not criminally responsible:

"As this inquiry commences and before any testimony is heard, Dr. Smith wishes to publicly acknowledge to the commission that in the 20 years that he performed autopsies at the direction of the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, he made a number of mistakes for which he is truly sorry.

"Dr. Smith sincerely regrets these mistakes and apologizes to all who may have been affected by his errors. Dr. Smith wishes to emphasize that any such mistakes were made honestly and without any intention to harm or obstruct the pediatric death investigations in which he was involved.

"At all times, Dr. Smith endeavoured to use whatever knowledge and expertise he possessed to render accurate pathologic opinions.

"In retrospect, he understands that in some 20 cases which form the basis of this inquiry, his work, while to the best of his ability at the time, was simply not good enough in certain circumstances."

(Courtesy of the Canadian Press)