

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)	SIXTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
)	
COUNTY OF YORK)	COURT OF GENERAL SESSIONS
)	
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,)	2009-GS-46-2695
)	2009-GS-46-2696
Prosecution,)	
vs.)	
)	
TAYLOR DURDEN,)	
)	
Defendant.)	AFFIDAVIT OF RYAN PAULSEN
)	

COMES NOW THE AFFIANT SWORN AND STATES THE FOLLOWING:

1 1. My name is Dr. Ryan Paulsen. I have an MD in internal medicine from Duke
2 University, and have been a Fellows Professor of Pathology at the University of
3 Maryland for the last six years. Prior to that, I was the Associate Director of the
4 University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Facility. It is more commonly referred to
5 as the "Body Farm." It is a facility in which medical examiners, anthropologists, and law
6 enforcement officials study all manner of death and decomposition in order to make
7 better decisions in criminal investigations and to make more thorough diagnoses in the
8 autopsy procedures. I have been contracted by both prosecutor's offices and defense
9 firms for over 15 years as an expert in the field of pathology, decomposition, and in
10 questions determining the timeline of death. My average annual income as an expert
11 (apart and separate from my Fellowship at the University) has been approximately
12 \$200,000 per year for the past five years, before taxes and overhead. I hold
13 certifications in Anatomical and Clinical Pathology, as well as Forensic Pathology and
14 Anthropology.

15
16 2. I was contracted by the defense to look into the matter of the death of Jessica
17 Bateson. For the purposes of my investigation, I examined the health records, medical
18 release, emergency room record, death certificate, and Coroner's report on Ms.
19 Bateson. These documents were all released to the defense from the solicitor's office.
20 My report works from the assumption that these reports are full and complete records on
21 Jessica Bateson with no other records or information being available through other
22 means.

1 3. The autopsy conducted by the State does properly show that the swelling of
2 the brain stem did ultimately cause the death of Ms. Bateson. What the State missed in
3 their overzealous attempt to lay blame on what should more properly be termed an
4 accident were the underlying health conditions of Ms. Bateson. Assistant Medical
5 Examiner Chessler appears fascinated with the idea of a death from hyponatremia.
6 I can certainly remember being fascinated by some of the more obscure deaths that
7 I attended when first cutting my teeth as a pathologist.

8
9 4. According to the medical records provided by the solicitor's office, Ms.
10 Bateson had a family history of thyroid problems. Hypothyroidism is a direct cause for
11 acute hyponatremia and some resulting fatalities. In the medical waiver statement
12 obtained by the State from the ESE honors society, there is no mention of that condition
13 or history within the family. Certainly, if someone was suffering from this condition or the
14 family had a history thereof, it should have been checked and then based upon that,
15 other health precautions would be made, including but not limited to warnings about
16 volume of water intake and salt consumption among others. Without the disclosure of
17 that information to the ESE members, they could not reasonably make accommodations
18 for Ms. Bateson, or even know what type of activities might be harmful to her.

19
20 5. Regardless of recent media hype, death from acute hyponatremia is a rare
21 event. Other questions as to Ms. Bateson's death also are brought up. Acute
22 hyponatremia is often best dealt with in the field and en route to the hospital. I saw
23 nothing in the emergency room record to reflect a proper diagnosis of acute
24 hyponatremia in progress. Had that been done, there would have been multiple
25 treatment regimens for the condition to lessen the brain stem swelling and thus prevent
26 brain damage and death.

27
28 6. Additionally, in reviewing the autopsy report and associated blood work,
29 I noted the sodium serum levels were depressed, but certainly not in the critical range.
30 In the report, the brain stem swelling is much more consistent with a reaction of the
31 hyperthyroid to an influx of water rather than of the water alone. In addition to evaluating
32 sodium serum levels, when acute hyponatremia is suspected, a seasoned pathologist
33 draws from the fluid remaining in the bladder to gain a baseline for the volume of water
34 that had been in the system of the deceased at the time of death. This was not done by

1 Dr. Chessler, and had this occurred in my lab, it would have been considered a
2 fundamentally basic error. Without that baseline information as to how much water was
3 in the bladder, it would be difficult, if not impossible to determine the volume of water in
4 the deceased's system in order to properly rule out hypothyroidism and establish acute
5 hyponatremia as a sole cause of brain stem swelling and ultimately death.

6
7 7. I have known Dr. Chessler since s/he was my son's classmate in medical
8 school. Jamie was not a very impressive student according to my son, Jason. Jason
9 even said that Jamie would cheat off of his exams. Further evidence of Jamie's lack of
10 academic aspirations is the fact that Jamie has never pursued any further specialization,
11 teaching fellowships, or been published. Clearly not the equal of my son.

12
13 8. Though a horrible accident for which the community and University should
14 grieve, given the lack of disclosure and the lack of diagnosis by medical professionals
15 involved with this case, I cannot see the connection of responsibility to anyone other
16 than that of Ms. Bateson.

17
18 9. I am aware that Dr. Chessler believes that I am nothing more than a
19 mercenary for the highest dollar, but I base my opinions on the medical records alone
20 despite the financial rewards.

WITNESS ADDENDUM

I have reviewed this statement, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time.
The material facts are true and correct.

Signed,

Ryan Paulsen, MD

Ryan Paulsen

SIGNED AND SWORN to me before 8:00a.m. on the day of this round of the 2010
South Carolina Mock Trial Competition.

C.M. McCormack

C.M. McCormack, Notary Public
State of South Carolina
My Commission Expires: 07/25/16