

# F.B.I. Investigating Possible Drug Link To Hospital Deaths

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ANN ARBOR, Mich., Aug. 19 (AP)—The Federal Bureau of Investigation and a Veterans Administration medical team are investigating the possibility that at least eight deaths and 34 other cases of respiratory difficulties at a V.A. hospital here may be the result of a drug used to suppress breathing.

Hospital officials said today they were checking whether any drugs were missing from the facility's intensive care unit or pharmacy.

However, they stressed they had "not had confirmation . . . no positive proof" that drugs had been taken.

They also reported the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor was conducting tests to see whether traces of certain drugs could be found in various samples taken from patients who had suffered recent breathing attacks. Tests are also being conducted to see if the intravenous equipment used on all the patients involved shows any trace of a drug.

Dr. Duane Freier, acting chief of staff at the VA Hospital, confirmed a report that a bottle of an unidentified drug was found "in an inappropriate place," a refrigerator in the intensive care unit.

The F.B.I. conducted interviews at the hospital Friday and a spokesman for the agency in Detroit said the bureau was investigating the matter to see whether any Federal laws have been broken.

Meanwhile, several interns, residents and full-time staff members in the hospital said they were informing each patient of the investigation and the reasons behind it.

As one intern put it, "I simply told my patients there had been an inordinant number of respiratory arrests that couldn't be explained."