

# Killer still unknown in VA hospital deaths

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. — FBI agents quizzed Veterans Administration Hospital employees yesterday for clues to a killer who injected fatal doses of a paralyzing drug into some of 41 patients who recently suffered respiratory arrests.

Eight of the stricken patients died. The original 41 cases were reported over a 19-day period ending Aug. 15, but officials are now probing records dating back to July 1. (28 JUL - 15 AUG)

"We have ruled out medical coincidence, error and drug contamination," said Dr. Duane Freier, acting chief of staff at the Ann Arbor hospital.

"That leaves us with the fact that some, perhaps many, of the (respiratory) arrests were caused by someone with intent," Freier said.

The FBI has doubled its force assigned to the investigation. Hospital files, equipment and glassware were placed under a tight guard.

Jay Bailey, a Detroit FBI agent, said there are "no suspects in the deaths." He said the FBI investigation is "along the lines of one that would be conducted in a murder case."

Agents swept through the hospital wards, asking employes, "what kind of a person do you think would do this?"

Dozens of staff members who assisted in treating the respiratory failures were questioned to determine whether there was any one person who seemed to be on hand for them all.

The first indication that the rash of respiratory failures was caused deliberately came Friday (when traces of the muscle-paralyzing drug, Pavulon, were found in urine samples of a surviving patient. 22 AUG)

Officials said all the victims were receiving food or medication intravenously. The drug could have been injected into rubber coupling devices on intravenous tubing "in a matter of seconds without the patient even being aware it was done."

Since the probe began, hospital officials have limited admissions and surgery to emergency cases.