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Nurse Charged With Felony In Medication Error Death

Medication error could send nurse to prison for up to 6 years in death of OB patient.

By [Stephen A. Frew JD](#)

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A former Madison, WI nurse was charged with criminal neglect in the death of 16-year-old Jasmine Gant, who died in July of a medication error while giving birth. Julie Thao, 41, of Belleville, faces a count of neglect of a patient causing great bodily harm, which carries a maximum prison sentence of six years in prison.

Gant allegedly died after an epidural anesthetic was allegedly mistaken for a prescribed dose of penicillin. Thao is alleged to have taken the drug from a locker and administered it to the patient intravenously even though the container carried a warning that it was not for IV use.

The patient died within an hour, but the infant survived when doctors performed an emergency cesarian delivery.

A criminal complaint alleges that Thao ignored every safeguard put in place to prevent medication errors at Madison's St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center. The prosecutor alleges Thao ignored the hospital's "Bridge System," used to scan medication labels before drugs are administered, took a potentially lethal drug from a storage locker without authorization and didn't read the label of a drug she injected into Gant.

She also is alleged to have violated a hospital procedure that requires the nurse or physician to consider "right patient, right route, right dose, right time and right medication" before administering a drug.

According to police, Thao said she decided to get a bag containing epidural to show Gant what it looked like, then placed it on the counter. Another nurse delivered the penicillin, placing it on the same counter. The complaint alleges that Thao started to administer the drug without scanning it and that within minutes the patient went into seizures.

According to the published reports, Thao removed the improper medication bag in the ensuing emergency response.

Thao no longer works for St. Mary's Hospital, and civil actions are reported pending against her and the hospital.

Criminal neglect charges are seldom involved in medical error cases in acute care hospitals, but are more common in serious events in nursing homes.