

State

Thallium poisoning in SMU art department ruled out

United Press International
DALLAS — A medical task force investigating a strange illness that struck six Southern Methodist University art students reported Tuesday it could not find what caused the attacks and concluded whatever it was, it is gone now.

The task force issued a statement saying exhaustive searches were performed to find foreign elements in the SMU art laboratories but that nothing surfaced that could have caused the illness.

"The students have continued to be followed as

out-patients on a regular basis and have shown consistent improvement," the task force report said. "This suggests to us, since there have been no further cases discovered and that those who became ill are improving, that there was a 'point exposure' to a toxic agent that is not present on a continuing basis."

The first case was reported in November by a female art student who complained of hair loss, anxiety and peripheral neuropathy (numbness in the hands and feet). Following that report, three other art students were found to be complaining of the

same symptoms. Another two art students also were discovered to be suffering from similar but milder symptoms.

The first student reporting the illness has since left school.

"An inspection of the Department of Art facilities was performed on a room-to-room basis, including collection of numerous samples for toxicologic analysis," the task force report said.

"Because hair loss and peripheral neuropathies are

associated with thallium poisoning, thallium as well as other heavy metals were particularly looked for. Biologic samples were also obtained from the patients and underwent extensive toxicologic analyses. Although additional tests are being performed, in no instance has thallium or other poison been found."

The report also criticized the news media for allegedly distorting the story.

"Symptoms are not similar to Legionnaires' disease, and there is no information that fingernails

have fallen off of any of the students," the report criticized early reports. "Because of the absence of new cases and the absence of detection of any toxic agent, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a hazard in the Department of Art at SMU at the present time; or that the illnesses that appeared were caused by a toxic agent in the SMU Department of Art."

The report said samples would continue to be taken in an effort to discover what caused the illness.

Father says Pollock used drugs legally

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — The father of a physician found shot to death in San Antonio said Tuesday his son was internationally known for his study of molds and was using mushrooms in research toward finding a cure for bronchial asthma and to assist autistic children.

Police — claiming that tests revealed the mushrooms contained hallucinogen — obtained a search warrant Monday and confiscated dozens of containers of mushrooms from the home where the body of Dr. Steven H. Pollock was discovered late Saturday.

Drug Enforcement Agency officials have confirmed that the doctor's practice is being investigated by local law enforcement officers, the DEA, the Department of Public Safety, the State Board of Medical Examiners and the Texas Pharmacy Board, particularly in connection with the writing of prescriptions.

Walter Pollock, a real estate developer-contractor from Los Angeles, said there was nothing illegal about his son's possessing the mushrooms and added that he was extremely upset with officers for hauling away the research projects.

"Police are holding them illegally," he said, "and all of his research experiments are dying. They have killed 10 years of research."

Investigators said Tuesday they had made no arrests in the slaying of the 33-year-old doctor, who was discovered on the floor of the fashionable home. He had been shot once in the back of his head with a large-caliber weapon, police said.

The doorknob had been ripped from the front door and furnishings inside overturned and wrecked.

"He was working on a cure for bronchial asthma and a project to help autistic children," the father said. "He was definitely engaged in research projects and was an international figure in the field of mycology," the study of molds.

But an advertisement in "High Times" magazine offers mushroom-growing kits from the Hidden Creek Magic Mushroom Farm, which is believed to be the greenhouse in Dr. Pollock's back yard.

The advertisement in the national magazine offers a variety of mushroom kits containing several varieties of mushrooms and a book entitled "Magic Mushroom Cultivation" by Dr. Steven M. Pollock. The ad describes Hidden Creek as "the magic mushroom people who are forever keeping your mind in mind."

But the question of mushroom growing and selling apparently is of secondary concern to authorities probing Pollock's alleged writing of prescriptions.

A San Antonio pharmacist said Pollock was being pressured by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to stop the alleged large-scale writing of prescriptions.

Craig Bell, president of the Bexar County Pharmaceutical Association, said Monday: "I heard they went in and said 'you can't have this practice, you have to quit,' or they were going to put him away (in jail)."

The pharmacist said he "found it strange his (Pollock's) patients needed that much Schedule 2 drugs, which are the most habituating and addicting."

White asked to take action in Gulf feud

United Press International
AUSTIN — A South Texas legislator Tuesday asked Attorney General Mark White to take swift and firm measures to prevent the Ku Klux Klan from provoking violence between Texas and Vietnamese fishermen along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Rep. Arnold Gonzales, D-Corpus Christi, asked White to investigate allegations the Klan had offered to destroy boats belonging to the Vietnamese fishermen near Rockport, and also to investigate a so-called "survival camp" operated by the Klan near Fort Worth.

"We cannot have this marauding band of vigilantes serving as a catalyst for violence between these two groups of fishermen. To overlook the KKK's intervention would be to allow a potentially riotous situation to brew in our own backyard," Gonzales said in his letter to the attorney general.

"Recent developments in this situation dictate that swift, firm measures be taken to avoid any violence."

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