



Family wants answers in probe of McHenry Co. nursing home deaths

By Charles Keeshan | Daily Herald Staff

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Frustrated by the slow pace of an investigation into suspicious deaths at a McHenry County nursing home, the daughter of a Cary woman exhumed last year as part of the inquiry is asking a judge to order the nursing home to turn over its patient and medical records.

The petition, filed Thursday on behalf of Cary resident Vickie Lund, also seeks a court order allowing her attorneys to depose Woodstock Residence nursing home administrator Alyssa Nataupsky and a former nurse assistant they believe has information relevant to allegations of six mercy killings at the facility.

"The thought that my mother's death and suffering could have been avoided causes me to feel powerless and unsettled," Lund said. "Our family needs answers. We need to know the truth."

Nataupsky did not return a call for comment.

The nurse assistant referred questions to her lawyer.

"My advice to her would be not to submit to any deposition unless there is a court order, and I would first fight that order in court," attorney Sam Amirante said.

Amirante said he is unsure what information his client would have that Lund could not obtain through the nursing home.

Lund's mother, Virginia R. Cole, was exhumed by authorities in March, about six months after she died while a resident at the Woodstock Residence.

In a statement released Thursday, Lund said her mother was rushed to a hospital Sept. 6, 2006, unconscious and with a weak pulse, just one day after feeling well enough to have her hair styled. She died four days later, with pneumonia and heart disease listed as the causes.

However, state police and the McHenry County state's attorney's office launched an investigation in November 2006 into accusations the 78-year-old woman was one of six Woodstock Residence patients killed by lethal doses of morphine administered by a former employee.

Cole was one of three former nursing home residents exhumed and autopsied last year as part of the investigation. Authorities say they still are waiting for laboratory results from those autopsies to help determine whether the deceased were murder victims.

Nataupsky previously has said she does not believe anything inappropriate occurred at the home, and blamed the investigation on a disgruntled ex-worker who she says went to police with false accusations.

Lund's attorney, Steven Levin, said he hopes to learn the identity of that former employee through the home's records and depositions of Nataupsky and the nurse assistant.

"We believe that a nursing home employee has told authorities that another nursing home employee administered fatal doses of morphine," he said. "We hope to identify the source of that complaint and talk to

that person."

Cole's family is not seeking any records from state police or the state's attorney at this time, Levin said.

"We're not critical of the state's investigation, we just don't know when it's going to end," he said. "Maybe there's a legitimate holdup, but we felt we needed to be proactive."