

The Nurses Are Innocent: The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy

Gavin Hamilton MD FRCP(C)

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THE NURSES ARE INNOCENT

The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy



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Gavin Hamilton MD FRCP(C) : The Nurses Are Innocent: The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Nurses Are Innocent: The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Real life "CSI" By Leonard I. Goldman Currently there is great interest in the role that forensic medicine plays in crime investigation. At least six television programs (three "CSI's," two "NCIS's" and "Body of Proof") all stress how medical procedures are used to determine the guilt or

innocence of alleged criminals. Unfortunately the limitations of these studies are rarely identified. Dr. Gavin Hamilton's book, "The Nurses are Innocent, The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy," addresses this issue in great detail. He identifies the medical problems that resulted in the indictment of a nurse at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada for the deaths of children alleged due to her administration of the cardiac drug Digoxin. His clinical observations on the contaminants present within intravenous solutions, as well as the misuse of postmortem blood digoxin levels provide the fascinating scenario which eventually resulted in the nurse's proof of innocence. I recommend this book for all "CSI" buffs who want the insight of an astute observer into the many phases of forensic medicine as well as their potential limitations.

Gavin Hamilton's research shows that a toxin found in natural rubber might well have been the culprit in the 43 babies' deaths at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children in 1980-81. In 1980-81, 43 babies died at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children from a supposed digoxin overdose. Serial murder was suspected, leading to the arrest of nurse Susan Nelles. In order to clear Nelles' name, an investigation was launched to find an alternate explanation. No one on the Grange Royal Commission of Inquiry had expertise in diagnosis. The post-mortem diagnosis of digoxin poisoning was based on a single biochemical test without knowledge of the normal values. Gavin Hamilton's extensive research shows that a toxin found in natural rubber, a digoxin-like substance, might well have been the culprit in the babies' deaths. He clearly demonstrates that explanations other than serial murder account for the cluster of infant deaths at HSC. What can be learned from this black stain on Canada's judicial system? One lesson certainly stands out: we can't ever again allow a group of unqualified amateur diagnosticians to make life-and-death decisions about such important matters as potential serial murders.

...The real parallel remains unknown to most Canadians even now; it's not that the wrong person was fingered for murder, but that no murders were committed at all. That's the conclusion meticulously and persuasively argued by retired physician Gavin Hamilton in *The Nurses are Innocent*. (Maclean's magazine) In 1980-81, 43 babies died at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children from a supposed digoxin overdose. Gavin Hamilton's research shows that a toxin found in natural rubber might well have been the culprit in the babies' deaths. He clearly demonstrates that explanations other than serial murder account for the cluster of infant deaths. About the Author Gavin Hamilton grew up in St. Thomas, Ontario, and attended UWO Medical School. After practising family medicine for nine years, he studied diagnostic radiology, receiving the fellowship diploma, then practicing as a private radiologist with the rank of assistant professor until retirement. He lives in London, Ontario.