

N.L. officials deny they downplayed drug errors

Last Updated: Wednesday, March 3, 2010 | 8:15 PM NT [Comments26Recommend25](#)
[CBC News](#)

Newfoundland and Labrador's largest health authority is denying accusations that it is hasn't revealed the gravity of recent drug errors.

"I am concerned by any comment suggesting that we are downplaying the seriousness of these errors," said Eastern Health CEO Vickie Kaminski. "We are taking it very seriously and are making contact with patients and their physicians who potentially have been impacted by these errors."

Opposition leader Yvonne Jones said Wednesday that Eastern Health is downplaying errors at its biochemistry laboratory in St. John's.

The Liberal leader said she has been contacted by a family who says their 14-year-old son is fighting for his life in the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre because of an error using the immunosuppressive drug Cyclosporine.



*'N.L. Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones spoke with reporters in St. John's Wednesday. (CBC)*It's often given to people after they have a organ transplant and reduces the risk that their body will reject the new organ.

In late February, Eastern Health said it discovered that some of its patients were receiving incorrect amounts of Cyclosporine because a machine it uses to measure levels of the drug wasn't calibrated properly.

Eastern Health has arranged to have the Cyclosporine levels of 235 transplant patients, and people who have compromised immune systems, retested.

Jones said the family is very upset at how Eastern Health and the government have handled the situation.

Jones said she's heard from three other people with serious concerns that Cyclosporine has harmed them.

Offers apology

In a news release, Kaminski said she will be providing an update Thursday about the actions Eastern Health took after it became aware of laboratory errors.

"On behalf of Eastern Health, I do sincerely apologize to this patient's family for the distress these errors have caused them," said Kaminski.

She also denied that Eastern Health mishandled the Cyclosporine problem.

"When we advised the public that we were investigating the errors in Cyclosporine testing, we did say that our investigation was prompted by the treatment being received by an acutely ill in-patient," said Kaminski. "However, we did not provide any specific details of the patient's condition because we were responding to the family's request to respect their privacy."

The release said Kaminski offered to meet with the 14-year-old's family to discuss what happened to him but they declined to meet with her because they are too concerned with their son's immediate care.

Kaminski is willing to meet with them when the family believes it's appropriate, the release said.