

Man Died Of Natural Causes In University Of Missouri Dorm

News

Posted by : Randy

Posted on : 2014/2/18 4:50:00

(ColumbiaTribune.com) - Boone County Chief Medical Examiner Carl Stacy said an 18-year-old man found in a University of Missouri dorm in October died from complications caused by an enlarged heart.



Highland, Ill., man Gregory G. Holthaus was found dead at about 9:07 a.m. Oct. 13 in the Pershing group of residence halls. He was in Columbia visiting a friend who was an MU student.

Holthaus' cause of death is listed in the autopsy report as "sudden cardiac arrhythmia due to dilated hypertrophic cardiomyopathy," or sudden cardiac arrest caused by an enlarged heart. Stacy signed the report Jan. 14, and it was released to the Tribune late Friday.

Soon after Holthaus was found, police said foul play was ruled out. Stacy did the autopsy Oct. 15, and urine and blood samples were sent to a laboratory at Saint Louis University for a toxicology screen, as is normal procedure for his office. The toxicology screen came back negative for any medications or drugs, and the teen had a small amount of alcohol in his system, 23 milligrams per deciliter in his blood. The legal threshold for intoxication in the state of Missouri is 80 milligrams per deciliter, Stacy said.

Medical Examiner Eddie Adelstein, a colleague of Stacy's, said cases like this are not uncommon. Although they know Holthaus' death was related to his enlarged heart, which weighed 540 grams â Adelstein said for a man his size, 5 feet 7 inches tall and 205 pounds, it should have been around 350 to 400 grams â the specific event that led to his sudden cardiac arrest will likely never be known.

"Whenever you see a student or a young person who dies, there could be some things you can't diagnose," Adelstein said this morning.

People with enlarged hearts are more susceptible to arrhythmia, an abnormal heart rhythm, Stacy said, and alcohol can lead to complications, though no evidence was found that it contributed to Holthaus' death. Abnormal heartbeats and abnormal electrical impulses are common in people with the condition and can also contribute to a sudden death, Adelstein said, but without knowing Holthaus' medical history and exactly what happened at the time of death, what triggered the arrhythmia cannot be ascertained definitively.

Holthaus had been drinking the night before he died and woke up at about 6 a.m. and took a shower and ate, according to the autopsy report. A friend found him three hours later. Per Stacy's policy, Holthaus' family was notified before the report was released to reporters, he said.

"It's very difficult for families to accept sudden deaths," Adelstein said. "They're not supposed to."