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From: Deana Sullivan [deanadss@yahoo.ca]
Sent: Saturday, April 19, 2008 6:22 PM
To: info
Subject: Inquiry

I felt over the weekend I should write this e-mail and hopefully it can be forwarded to inquiry counsel to clarify some items discussed this week in the hearings.

I've learned from co-workers that there has been some discussion about how an erroneous online story was corrected and it seems, from George Tilley's testimony, he was not aware of how it was pulled from the website.

I was personally involved in that issue. As a health reporter for The Telegram at the time, I was asked to do a story on the breast cancer testing after it first broke in The Independent. My editor at the time, Ken Meaney gave me a copy of The Independent article and asked me to look into it.

I contacted Eastern Health which lined up an interview for me, I believe it was with Dr. Robert Williams, who explained the whole matter of ER/PR testing to me. The resulting story, which appeared in The Telegram the following day, was picked up by CBC. I wasn't aware of this until Deborah Thomas, who was working with Eastern Health as a media relations officer, phoned me in the morning and informed me that cbc national (www.cbc.ca) had taken my breast cancer story but put a new headline and top on it, making it erroneous, as if women had been given incorrect breast cancer test results.

I took it upon myself to check out the site and e-mailed CBC, telling them frankly if they're going to copy my stories from The Telegram, they should present them accurately.

I received an e-mail back thanking me for this information and received another call from Deborah Thomas within an hour or so. She told me to check out the cbc.ca website again because they had taken my story in its entirety and posted it on their website, this time crediting The St. John's Telegram. I was never aware that Eastern Health was reluctant to contact CBC itself, as has come out in e-mails presented at the inquiry from Susan Bonnell.

Deborah worked with me at The Telegram before taking the job at Eastern Health and I assumed she was doing this just as a personal favour to inform me someone had picked up my story but put a different slant on it. Eastern Health did say that I had presented the story accurately because there was a lot of confusion out there about whether breast cancer testing had been incorrect. I knew it was the estrogen/progesterone testing following the cancer diagnosis that was flawed which meant that some women were not offered drugs like Tamoxifen to reduce the likelihood of cancer recurring and feeding on hormones.

I was also at the first media briefing held at Eastern Health and just for your information, Susan Bonnell initially did not want the media to report on the information we were given. We sat through a briefing with Dr. Oscar Howell, Dr. Kara Laing and Dr. Nash Denic and then were told it was for our information only. We could take notes but not publish anything. I argued against that,

saying how could I justify to my editors at work and the public that I attended this briefing and could not produce a story.

Finally, Bonnell agreed that we could publish a story but it would be embargoed until the following day. She said electronic media, could do interviews and air them in the morning. Again I argued that this type of embargo would

put The Telegram at a disadvantage because if radio and TV media could air a story the following day, considering our press deadlines are at night, we would be a full day behind the rest of the media which would mean the story

would appear in our paper a day later than everyone else.

I was adamant about this, and Bonnell eventually came back to me and said the health authority was agreeable to me running with the story the following day.

We were not allowed to record anything in the briefing, (no tape recorders or cameras), so I had to rely on my written notes. Thank goodness I'm well experienced in taking good notes in these situations and we did run a story the following day.

I thought the whole PR plan here was intentionally restrictive, but I had no idea at the time of the backroom discussions which are now coming out in the inquiry.

If I can be of any help, feel free to contact me. I am now an editor with The Telegram, working night shifts, but I can be reached at my work e-mail dss@thetelegram.com

or my personal e-mail deanadss@yahoo.ca

My home phone number during the day is 739-6360. At work at night it's 364-2323.

Sincerely,
Deana Stokes Sullivan

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