


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Pitt Greensburg student dies of alcohol poisoning at CMU fraternity

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published: Mon, 15 Mar, 2010

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Carnegie Mellon University's Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity

much, he said, adding that the death was ruled an accident.

Results from the autopsy of a student who passed away last week at a Carnegie Mellon fraternity show that he died as a result of alcohol poisoning, sparking a strong reaction from Pitt students and officials about the risks of alcohol and party-related behavior.

Matthew Tembo, a 22-year-old student from France who attended Pitt's Greensburg campus, was at the CMU Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity house on Morewood Avenue for a birthday celebration when he died after "likely drinking too much," city police detective Christine Williams said at a press conference last week. Responders found Tembo on Saturday, March 6, around 1 p.m.

Edward Strimlan, chief forensic investigator for the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office, confirmed Williams' speculation yesterday with results from the student's autopsy.

The Medical Examiner's Office performed an autopsy on Tembo on March 8, Strimlan said, finding the death to be a result of ethanol poisoning. This is the report commonly associated with those who die from drinking too

"As soon as we rule a death to be accidental, the case moves out of our hands," Strimlan said. "It is then up to the CMU and Pittsburgh Police to decide if any kind of charges should be filed against those involved."

Strimlan could not speculate about the likelihood of charges being leveled against the fraternity, though he did acknowledge that such actions are possible, even though Tembo was of legal drinking age at the time of his death. As of yesterday, CMU and city police officials could not say whether any such charges were in the works.

The most effective way to avoid alcohol poisoning and related alcohol risks is to "just say no" to drinking, according to Pitt's Student Health Service website. Other listed tips for safer alcohol consumption include accurately observing the alcohol content of liquor and mixed drinks before consumption, drinking no more than one drink per hour and never using alcohol when under the influence of other drugs, including prescriptions.

Failure to observe these guidelines can greatly increase the risk of alcohol poisoning, which can occur in the average college-age person when his blood alcohol level reaches 0.20 percent, according to the Department of Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Education. The way alcohol affects individuals varies largely depending on the drinker's tolerance level, but reaching a blood alcohol level of 0.20 takes about seven drinks in the span of an hour.

Even so, a heavy drinker might not be at medical risk at 0.20 percent, though a novice drinker could be in serious danger.

It is vital that students be on the lookout for signs of alcohol poisoning, Pitt's Student Health Service website says, in order to ensure their own safety and that of others who might be drinking. A person suffering from alcohol poisoning might be unable to stand or walk, breathing slowly with 10 seconds or more between breaths, passed out, unable to awaken or unable to control basic body functions.

If there is any question as to whether a person is suffering from alcohol poisoning, medical attention should be sought immediately, the website says.

Pitt spokesman John Fedele said Pitt has alcohol awareness programs in place both on its Oakland campus and in Greensburg, as well as counseling services available through the Office of Student Affairs to assist students who are experiencing any sort of alcohol problems. Counseling services are available for friends or any other students having trouble coping with the tragedy as well, he said.

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