

The Emily Jerry Story



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Rx for errors: Drug error killed their little girl

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Enlarge | By Tim Harrison for USA TODAY

Kelly Jerry, left, and Chris Jerry hold daughter Emily's blanket and photograph, her rocking horse in the foreground. Emily died from a medical mistake.



Enlarge

Emily died in 2006 from a prescription error.

By **Kevin McCoy** and **Erik Brady**, USA TODAY

Emily Jerry was nearly ready to go home from a Cleveland hospital. The grapefruit-size tumor in her abdomen seemed gone, and the 2-year-old with blond ringlets and blue eyes was getting one last round of chemotherapy just to make sure.

Instead, the treatment killed her. A pharmacy technician at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital mixed Emily's chemotherapy drug with a saline solution 26 times above normal. The pharmacist on duty didn't catch the error. Soon after getting the drug, Emily was on life support. She died three March 1, 2006.

On Tuesday, a House bill that would set mandatory training and regulatory standards for all pharmacists is scheduled to be introduced by Rep. Steve Latta of Ohio. He calls it Emily's Act.

A similar proposal in Emily's home state, Ohio, will be considered this year by state lawmakers. The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists is pushing for tougher standards for technicians, who need prove only that they are high school graduates with no criminal record.

Emily's parents, Kelly and Christopher Jerry, are leading a crusade for tougher standards for the people responsible for entering prescriptions into computers, checking dosages and getting the correct drug into medication containers. They say the circumstances surrounding her death lend urgency to their cause.

"It would have been a whole other story if the hospital had been responsible," says Kelly Jerry, an elementary school teacher in Concord Township, Ohio. "The way she died in this horrific way she did, we can't turn our backs until we help make changes so that we can protect another family."

Emily's parents say a USA TODAY series published

Ohio governor signs law designed to help prevent pharmacy errors

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By **Kevin McCoy**, USA TODAY

RX FOR ERRORS

Regulation: Chains' ties run deep on pharmacy boards; see nationwide graphic



'Landmark' legislation: Ohio toughens state laws for pharmacy technicians | Florida law prescribes rules for pharmacy techs

Washington reacts: Congress considers action in wake of 2-year-old's death in Ohio

GRAPHIC: How prescriptions are filled, how mistakes are made, and what pharmacies are doing to prevent them

From our Special Report -- DAY 1: Speed, volume can trigger mistakes | Debate: Corporate policies can cause errors, retired pharmacist says | They actually help, current pharmacist says

DAY 2: One pharmacy's fatal mistake; hear woman's story of her late husband | Drugstore chains rely on pharmacy technicians

DAY 3: Many lawsuits against pharmacies settled in silence | Minimizing risks: 9 steps you can take | Pharmacist counseling helps

As the mother of Emily Jerry looked on, Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland on Wednesday signed a new state law aimed at preventing new tragedies like the prescription error that led to her two-year-old daughter's death in 2006.

Officially known as Emily's Law, the statute for the first time requires all Ohio pharmacy technicians to meet minimum education and training standards.

Emily, who was undergoing treatment for a grapefruit-sized tumor, died after a technician at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland mixed a chemotherapy drug with a saline solution that contained 26 times more salt than normal. A hospital pharmacist failed to detect the error.

Emily's death three days later inspired her parents to start a crusade that culminated in the celebratory signing ceremony.

"We started out with Ohio having absolutely no rules or regulations for pharmacy technicians, and now we have the most stringent law in the country," said Jerry. "It's an incredible feeling that we finally got here."

Under the new law, pharmacy technicians will be required to have a high school diploma or the equivalent, submit to a criminal background check and pass a pharmacy proficiency exam. They would also be required to wear technician identification while at work.

Violations could result in criminal penalties for both technicians and their employers.

"I hope this serves as a model for other states to follow in improving patient safety in pharmacies," said state Sen. Timothy Grendell, the new law's chief sponsor.

He said USA TODAY stories over the last year that focused on prescription safety issues were instrumental to

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Chris Jerry, Father and Advocate



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Eric Cropp, former Pharmacist



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The screenshot shows a list of four forum categories. A red arrow points to the 'Pharmacy Practice' category. Each category includes a title, a brief description, and the latest post information.

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Title	
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Pharmacy Practice	Discuss pharmacy topics from clinical initiatives like anticoagulation monitoring and antimicrobial stewardship to operational tasks including medication distribution, cleanroom compounding and regulatory compliance. Share problems faced to success stories and how improvements have been made. Latest Post - Re: Have insulin problem.
Pharmacy and Healthcare Technology	The place to talk about Pharmacy and Health IT: what's new, what's needed, what's working well. Latest Post - Re: Astropharmacy
Infection Prevention and Control	A place for infection preventionists, epidemiologists and microbiologists to discuss infection control initiatives, contribute ideas and get support from peers across the country. Latest Post - Positive Deviance Webinar

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