

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
OF VICTORIA  
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: 2734/11

**FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST**

*Form 37 Rule 60(1)*  
*Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008*

**Inquest into the Death of: PHONG CAO**

Delivered On: 4 June 2012

Delivered At: Melbourne

Hearing Dates: 4 June 2012

Findings of: CORONER K. M. W. PARKINSON

Police Coronial Support Unit      Leading Senior Constable Tania Cristiano

I, K. M. W. PARKINSON, Coroner having investigated the death of PHONG CAO

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 4 June 2012

at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was PHONG THIET CAO

born on 4 March 1972

and the death occurred on 26 July 2011

at 36 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

**from:**

1a. HAEMORRHAGE FROM RIGHT GROIN WOUND

**in the following circumstances:**

1. Mr Phong Cao was born on 4 March 1972 and was 39 years old at the time of his death. An inquest was held by summary on 4 June 2012. Mr Cao had an extensive history of illicit drug use, including intravenous heroin usage. In January 2011 Mr Cao was admitted to hospital for repair of right groin arterial damage and haemorrhage arising from intravenous drug use.
2. On 26 July 2011 he was injecting heroin in a property where he often resided. He was accompanied by a friend who was also a heroin user. Mr Cao was injecting himself in the groin area and was having difficulty. He was bleeding from the groin when his friend arrived. His friend reports that he had difficulty accessing the vein and injecting himself.
3. Mr Cao was unable to stop the bleeding and an ambulance was called. Ambulance officers attended and report that he was initially conscious when they arrived, however lapsed into unconsciousness. Despite their interventions he was unable to be resuscitated. Mr Cao died at the scene on 26 July 2011. Police attended and investigated the scene. After extensive investigations police reported there were no suspicious circumstances.
4. An inspection and report was undertaken by Dr Eleanor Bott, Forensic Pathology Registrar with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. Dr Bott reported that the cause of death was haemorrhage from a right groin wound. She commented that at autopsy, on internal examination the right groin wound communicated with a femoral artery aneurysm which communicated with a fibrosed femoral vein. She further commented that infective arterial and periarterial lesions can develop from percutaneous needle insult with intravenous drug use.

Initially an injury may occur due to an unsuccessful attempt at femoral vein access. Inadvertent trauma to the arterial wall may result in a vascular or perivascular haematoma which in turn leads to the formation of an aneurysm.

5. It appears that the aneurysm had ruptured. The pathologist commented that the rupture may have occurred spontaneously or occurred as a result of trauma or injection. There is some coincidence between the attempts to inject and the rupture of the aneurysm which resulted in the haemorrhage and death. I am satisfied that it is likely Mr Cao's attempts to inject himself resulted in the rupture.
6. Dr Bott stated that a reasonable medical cause of death was 1a. Haemorrhage from Right Groin Wound.
7. I am satisfied that there were no suspicious circumstances. There is no evidence to suggest that Mr Cao intentionally took his own life. I am satisfied that the death was accidental arising from Mr Cao's intravenous drug use and injecting.
8. I find that Mr Phong Cao died on 26 July 2011 at 36 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy and that the cause of his death was 1a. Haemorrhage from Right Groin Wound.

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

The family of Mr Phong Cao  
Investigating Member, Victoria Police  
Interested parties

Signature:



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K. M. W. PARKINSON  
CORONER  
6 June 2012

