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Hospital bungle that cost a life
By ANNA PATTY Health Reporter
March 18, 2004

CESAR Morcilla had hidden a wedding ring for his partner of 13 years and was planning to propose.

He was looking forward to sharing the future with their son Vince Andre, 4. However, before he had a chance to propose to Maria Cadlaon, Mr Morcilla, 43, died a day after he was incorrectly discharged from St George Hospital's emergency department. "Cesar said he had a surprise for me, but I didn't find out what it was until after he died and I found the ring in his bag.

"What I can't understand is why the hospital sent him home when he was sick and why they didn't call me to tell me how serious he was the night before he died. "I didn't even have a chance to see him for the last time," Ms Cadlaon said. She plans to sue the hospital for discharging Mr Morcilla when he needed further treatment. The hospital has admitted it made an error

discharging him after his first visit on January 21. An independent review of the case headed by Professor Malcolm Fisher, area director of critical care at the Northern Sydney Area Health Service, confirms that Mr Morcilla should not have been discharged.

The report says a junior doctor failed to recognise signs of a urinary tract infection when he sent Mr Morcilla home with a

referral to see his GP.

"why did they refer him to a local doctor when he was already in hospital?" Ms Cadlaon said.

Mr Morcilla caught the train home, but his condition deteriorated.

He was rushed back to hospital at 8.20pm and diagnosed with urinary sepsis (blood poisoning), putting his life in grave danger.

At 1am he was transferred to the intensive care unit without Ms Cadlaon being informed. The hospital also experienced problems in getting blood to him, resulting in significant delays.

The independent report said Mr Morcilla was discharged inappropriately and the failure to contact Ms Cadlaon after the second admission was unacceptable.

Ms Cadlaon was finally called to the hospital when doctors were trying to save Mr Morcilla's life, but she was unable to see him before he died around 6.45am on January 22.

David Pearce, executive director of St George Hospital said the death was a tragedy and he had expressed his deepest condolences to the patient's family.

He said the hospital was in error discharging Mr Morcilla from the emergency department and that it had begun to implement changes recommended in Dr Fisher's review.

St George Hospital has also referred the matter to the NSW coroner.

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