

going to tell you what happened in the thirty-three hours following Richie's first DPT shot.' I told him, and he listened. He then wrote down on the death certificate, 'death due to irreversible shock.' When I asked him what caused the shock, he said the best he could do was to write down that the shock was due to a 'possible' DPT reaction."

Janet asked the coroner why he could not state point-blank that Richie's death was due to a DPT shot reaction, when it was obvious. She produced the *Physician's Desk Reference* (PDR) and read him the portion pertaining to pertussis vaccine reactions. The PDR was one of the many medical references and scientific articles Janet had read since Richie's death.

"He said he couldn't write down on the death certificate that Richie had died from a DPT reaction because 'the state's standing on immunizations would be in an uproar.' Besides, he said, it would be unscientific because the autopsy report was not specific enough about the cause of death. At that point, we discussed the specific, scientific definition of SIDS. Finally, he admitted that my son had died from 'irreversible shock' due to a 'probable reaction to DPT.'"

The coroner gave Janet and Anthony a note exempting any future children they might have from receiving the pertussis vaccine. Three weeks later he gave them a signed "query of death" stating the official cause of death, which was that Richie died from "irreversible shock" due to a "probable reaction to DPT." About two and a half months later, they discovered that Richie's official death certificate had not yet been filed by the coroner at the town clerk's office.

"We kept waiting for the state to send us an official death certificate and when we didn't get one, we called the town clerk's office and discovered that the official cause of death had never been filed by the coroner with the registrar. After we gave the registrar the signed 'query of death' given to us by the coroner more than two months before, listing the cause of Richie's death, we received an official death certificate the next day."

Janet recently spoke with her county health commissioner and asked if the county was aware of the coroner's report and the official cause of Richie's death. "The commissioner told me that she was not aware of the official cause of death, although she had heard that my son died soon after a DPT shot. She admitted that there is no follow-up on reports of adverse vaccine reactions or deaths immediately following immunization by state or county health officials," Janet said.