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## City Care Decried in Tot's Death

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and

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The death early Wednesday morning of eight-month-old Rosa Maria Rivera points up the urgent need to reorganize the way medical care is provided to the city's poor families.

That's the view of Dr. Lewis Hochheiser, director of the pediatric outpatient clinic at Hartford Hospital and a faculty member of the University of Connecticut Health Center.

The infant girl died in a police car on her way to Mt. Sinai Hospital at 3 a.m. Wednesday, having been examined and treated Tuesday at both Hartford and Mt. Sinai hospitals. **Became Sick Monday**

Her mother, Mrs. Ana Aldorondo of 94 Vine St., says the baby first became sick with diarrhea and vomiting Monday morning, the day she first brought the child to Hartford Hospital.

Doctors told her there was nothing seriously wrong with the child, but when the baby's condition worsened on Tuesday, she brought her back to Hartford Hospital. Still feeling the doctors did not realize the gravity of the child's condition and convinced that she was having problems communicating with

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the medical staff because of her inability to speak English, Mrs. Aldorondo decided to try Mt. Sinai Hospital.

This time she brought Rosa Maria's aunt, Lucelys Gomez, with her since Mrs. Gomez speaks English. But the doctors still insisted there was nothing seriously wrong with Rosa Maria.

She brought the child home, but Rosa Maria was breathing heavily and wouldn't sleep. She finally called the police, and on the way to the hospital, Rosa Maria died.

Doctors say the exact cause of Rosa Maria's death won't be determined until the autopsy studies are completed next week. The Hartford County medical examiner, Dr. Donald R. Hazen, said Friday the tentative cause of death is "acute gastroenteritis." This means a severe swelling of the lining of the stomach and intestines.

But Dr. Hazen doesn't yet know what caused the inflammation — a virus or a bacteria or an allergic reaction or a reaction to a certain food or chemical.

Doctors say knowing exactly what caused the attack will help medical officials determine if the staffs at the two hospitals handled the sick infant properly.

But even clearing up the tragic death of the baby won't automatically lead to an improved system of providing continuing care to the inner-city residents, according to Dr. Hochheiser.

### Programs Needed

What's needed, in his view, is the creation of complete care programs at the three hospitals that can fulfill the medical needs of these families who don't have their own doctors on a 24-hour basis.

Care, now, he said Friday, is fragmented. The city runs "well child" clinics at the Bergdorf Health Center and the hospitals each have similar programs. But none provide round-the-clock care on an on-going basis — except through their emergency rooms. The clinics, he said, need to be reorganized along the lines of a doctor's office practice, so that an individ-

ual family would receive coordinated care from the same staffers at each visit and so that these patients could avoid the hectic emergency room.

The Hartford Hospital doctors said they had trouble getting permission to examine the youngster and that her mother asked only for medication.

### Account Differs

Responding to a Courant reporter conversant in Spanish, Mrs. Aldorondo's account differs somewhat from that of the hospitals. She feels she had a great deal of difficulty communicating with the doctors, because of her inability to speak English, and contends on several occasions, she thought they even laughed at her.

At one point she insisted that the child be admitted to the hospital and told the doctors she would not leave until Rosa Maria was admitted. She said the doctors were concerned about who would pay for Rosa Maria's stay if the child was hospitalized. She said she told them the baby's father had Blue Cross and would pay "up to the last cent."

But still she had no success and took the child home. Rosa Maria was breathing heavily and would not sleep. Her eyes were rimmed with black, the mother said, and her hands and nose very cold.

She tried giving her milk with an eyedropper, but after two drops the baby turned her head — and by then she was barely breathing. That is when the mother called the police.

Mrs. Aldorondo says she can't understand why trained doctors were unable to realize the severity of the case, when she, a woman with only three years of grade schooling, knew all along that the baby was very ill.

"Why would I have called the police and the ambulance three times? Would I have called the ambulance just to take a ride around Hartford?" she asked.

Both Mrs. Aldorondo and the other members of her family are convinced that doctors failed to pay adequate attention to the child because the family is Spanish-speaking. They maintain it is typical of the "abuse" Spanish-speaking people are subjected to here.