

Jewelry stolen in deathbed robbery

By DON PEAT, TORONTO SUN

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Surveillance photos from Toronto East General Hospital show two men wanted for allegedly stealing jewelry from an unconscious woman in the palliative care unit. (TORONTO POLICE)

Two scheming thieves robbed an unconscious, elderly woman of her jewelry moments before she died in a Toronto hospital.

As the devastated woman's family dealt with the loss of their matriarch, who was in her 70s, and all her jewelry, Toronto Police hunted for the two men — trying to collar them and return the family's heirlooms.

Palliative care

The two thugs skulked into Toronto East General Hospital, on Coxwell Ave., around 8 p.m. on Tuesday and searched floor to floor before finding the woman in her palliative-care unit bed. They took every piece of jewelry the woman owned and left the hospital.

"Who goes into a dying woman's room and steals her jewelry?" said disgusted Toronto Police Det. Christopher Higgins.

"The family is pretty upset; this is all her lifetime possessions."

The family was at the woman's bedside but had gone downstairs for coffee when the thieves struck, Higgins said. Her roommate was also out of the room with a visitor.

When her family returned to their bedside vigil minutes later, they discovered the theft and called the cops.

Higgins said Wednesday the woman died while the officers were taking the theft report from the family in the hospital room.

In a sad twist, the woman was keeping her jewelry with her in the room because the last time she was in hospital thieves broke into her house, police said.

Still reeling from the loss of their relative and the loss of her most prized jewelry, Higgins said the family was in no condition to speak publicly Wednesday night.

"(Her husband) is devastated," Higgins said. "This is 50 years worth of the jewelry he's bought her and it's all gone, all the jewelry he's bought her, all the memories."

Higgins said so far, there are no other reports of theft in the hospital that night. Investigators are checking in other hospitals for similar crimes.

Police released hospital surveillance pictures of the men in the hope that someone will recognize them on Wednesday.

Higgins said he hopes someone will recognize the men and turn them into police.

"I'm hoping to know their names by (Thursday)," he said.

Both suspects are described as white and between 20 and 30 years old.

One man was around 5-foot-9 with short, dark brown hair. He was wearing blue jeans, a black leather jacket, a black and white striped shirt and white running shoes.

The second man had a shaved head and was last seen wearing a fedora-style hat and a dark jacket.

Arrest in hospital robbery

Woman victimized on her deathbed

By **CHRIS DOUCETTE**, TORONTO SUN

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Marcos Marinoni, 26, is wanted after a dying woman was robbed of her jewelry at Toronto East General Hospital. Isaac Lewkowicz, 29, has already been arrested.

One man was behind bars but a second is still on the run two days after an elderly woman was robbed of her jewelry on her deathbed.

Police say they were flooded with tips after surveillance images of two men were released Wednesday and within hours a 29-year-old man was taken into custody in the east end. "We've received a whole whack of calls," Det. Chris Higgins, of 54 Division, said Thursday.

Some tipsters even called to report similar robberies at other hospitals across the GTA.

"It looks like it may be the same guys," Higgins said, explaining Toronto cops are now working with Peel and York Regional police.

The investigation began Tuesday night after family members of a woman in her 70s called police from the palliative care unit at Toronto East General to report she had been robbed of thousands of dollars worth of jewelry when they momentarily stepped out of her fifth-floor room.

Const. Tony Vella said the woman's jewelry was stolen as she lay dying in her bed. The woman passed away moments before officers arrived.

"There were gold necklaces, a diamond ring and some other items that may be worth more than \$7,000," he said, adding family members consider the jewelry heirlooms.

Despite the arrest, the jewelry was not recovered.

"Her husband and children would really like to get this stuff back," Vella said.

He said the valuables were taken from the woman's purse and from a can.

The woman's home was broken into previously "so she brought her jewelry with her to the hospital for safekeeping," Vella said.

"But now she's been victimized again."

Rocky Prosser, hospital manager of protection services, said two men were captured by some of the Coxwell Ave. hospital's 235 security cameras around 7:30 p.m.

They were going from floor to floor and from room to room, he said.

Soon after, the pair were spotted leaving the woman's room and then out of the hospital. "I don't think they targeted her specifically, but they definitely targeted an area of the hospital where people are sick and dying," Prosser said. "I really don't think you can get any lower."

He said it appears no other rooms were burglarized and the hospital has not had any other such robberies prior to Tuesday.

"I've been doing (security) for 20 years and I've never seen anything like this before," Prosser said disgustedly.

"We feel really bad that this happened, especially to this family, who are now dealing with this while grieving the loss of a loved one," he said.

Prosser said his team will re-visit their procedures to see if there is anything they can do to ensure something like this doesn't happen again.

"But at some point you start to infringe on people's rights," Prosser said. "This is a public hospital, we don't want to turn it into some sort of police state."

Isaac Lewkowicz, 29, of Toronto, was arrested in Ajax shortly before 11 p.m. Wednesday.

He is charged with theft under, conspiracy to commit an indictable offence, theft, possession of heroin, possession of marijuana and four counts of failure to comply with probation.

Marcos Marinoni, 26, of no fixed address, is wanted for conspiracy to commit indictable offence and theft.

He is white, 5-foot-4, with black hair and brown eyes.

Anyone with information is urged to call police at 416-808-5400 or Crime Stoppers at 416-222-8722.