



“Committed Service and
Responsiveness”

OFFICE OF THE CORONER COUNTY OF CHESTER

Coroner: Christina VandePol, M.D., F-ABMDI

Chief Deputy Coroner: Sophia Garcia-Jackson, M.S., D-ABMDI

601 Westtown Road, Suite 090

Phone: 610- 344-6165

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The Chester County Coroner’s Office has determined the cause of death for Ivan James Hicks, Jr, 16, of Philadelphia, to be hypertensive cardiovascular disease. Contributing factors were cardiomegaly with fibrous scar and remodeling, obesity, and probable exposure to excessive environmental heat.

Hicks died suddenly on July 13, 2021 while at a 7 on 7 football activity in Coatesville, Chester County, PA. Immediate efforts by those present at the scene and subsequently by emergency services personnel were unsuccessful in resuscitating Hicks.

Specialized cardiac pathology was performed by the Jesse E. Edwards Registry of Cardiovascular Disease, an international center for cardiovascular research, education, and training. Their report concluded that while there were features of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a condition frequently associated with sudden death in young athletes, the diagnosis could not be definitively made or ruled out in this case.

“This tragic unexpected death of a young athlete was intensively investigated,” said Chester County Coroner Dr. Christina VandePol. “Testing included autopsy, toxicology, specialized cardiac pathology and neuropathology, and genetic testing. Key findings were an enlarged heart and a thickened heart muscle that showed scarring. Although the findings did not meet the criteria for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, they are associated with sudden cardiac death. Toxicology was negative. Genetic testing for 168 variants associated with cardiomyopathy and arrhythmias was also negative. Finally, the hot, humid weather conditions may have played a role, but we found no evidence of dehydration.”

At the time of his death Hicks tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. He had received his second Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on July 7, 2021. No evidence of COVID-19 respiratory disease was found, and cardiac examination showed no inflammation or myocarditis. The role, if any, that COVID-19 played in this death is therefore unknown, but in the opinion of the pathologists and the coroner it was not a contributing factor.

