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Medical marijuana patient murdered in Washington State

Sheriff raids medical garden while crowbar attack victim lies in coma

ORTING, WASH. MARCH 15, 2010 — A Washington medical marijuana patient has died after being attacked by robbers who were after his pot crop, in what is believed to be the first ever medical marijuana related murder in Washington State. When local police were called to the scene, rather than investigating the assault, they started questioning mortally injured Michael Shane Howard about how many plants he had.

The police told Howard, who had just been clubbed in the head with a crowbar, that the medics would "probably just put a big bandage on his forehead and leave him at the house."

Two days after the attack, as Howard lay dying, the police called his housemate, Renee, and asked when she was going to go visit him in the hospital. When Renee visited the hospital, Pierce County Sheriff's detectives began a raid on the home, still unaware of the severity of his injuries.

According to patient advocacy organization Cannabis Defense Coalition, Howard had been facing constant and continued police harassment in the small town of Orting, Washington. He was well-known to local law enforcement as "the medical marijuana guy" in town, and he was repeatedly pulled over, arrested, and put in jail because of his authorized use of medical marijuana.

Medical marijuana activist Steve Sarich -- himself the victim of a home invasion robbery Monday morning in Kirkland, Wash. -- had been working to publicize the Mike Howard murder over the weekend. Sarich suffered a shotgun blast to the arm and face, and returned fire with a handgun, critically wounding at least one suspect.

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The Cannabis Defense Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit member cooperative focused on marijuana activism in Washington State. More information is available at www.cdc.coop.