

Patient dies in pool at Willowbrook

New Dorp detectives are probing the circumstances leading to the death of a 21-year-old patient at Willowbrook State School whose body was found last night in the institution's swimming pool.

The victim, Ralph Toledo of the Bronx, was pulled unconscious from the pool by a lifeguard following an evening swim period.

Despite revival efforts by a Willowbrook staff doctor, Toledo was pronounced dead shortly before 8:15 p.m., about 45 minutes after he was found.

According to the police, the guard, Stewart Salter, was standing on the diving platform after the pool had been cleared, when he saw a "shadow."

Pulling the stricken patient out, Salter applied artificial respiration until a school physician arrived after being summoned by a Willowbrook Safety officer.

Although listing the death as accidental, police said they are leaving the case open pending the results of an autopsy to be performed today.

"This is the first time in 21 years anything like this has happened," said Dr. Harold Schiller, assistant director of the school for the mentally retarded.

Pointing out that all possible precautions were taken to avoid "unfortunate accidents" at the school, Dr. Schiller said the pool was supervised by a trained lifeguard as well as hospital personnel.

"The entire matter," Dr. Schiller added, "has been turned over to the medical examiner and police."

Toledo is the son of Lydia Suarez and stepson of Miguel Toledo, both of the Bronx.