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RealChoice

Deanna Bell

Teen given massive overdose at National Abortion Federation facility

A wrongful-death suit filed by survivors of Deanna Bell, age 13, alleged that she underwent a [safe, legal](#) multi-stage abortion September 3, 4, and 5, 1992 at [Edward Allred's](#) Albany Medical Surgical Center in Chicago. Deanna was 21 weeks pregnant. Her abortion was performed at a [National Abortion Federation](#) member facility by Steve Lichtenberg, a frequent presenter at NAF Risk Management Seminars.

What Is a NAF Clinic?

NAF is the professional association of abortion providers in North America. Our member clinics care for more than half the women who choose abortion each year in the United States. In order to become a member, a clinic must complete a rigorous application process. Member clinics have agreed to comply with our standards for quality and care, updated annually in our [Clinical Policy Guidelines](#), which set the evidence-based standards for abortion care in North America. NAF periodically conducts site visits to confirm that our clinics are in compliance with our guidelines.

Screen capture of assurance of safe, quality care on National Abortion Federation web site. It reads:

"What is a NAF Clinic? NAF is the professional association of abortion providers in North America. In order to become a member, a clinic must complete a rigorous application process. Member clinics have agreed to comply with our standards for quality and care.... NAF periodically conducts site visits to confirm that our clinics are in compliance with our guidelines.

Deanna's survivors say that non-physicians performed some medical procedures including inserting laminaria and Dilapan in Deanna's immature cervix.

An expert witness testified that Deanna was administered at least 250 mg Brevital, when a sufficient dose for an adult would be 70 mg., and that Deanna had been given 400 mg Brevital for anesthesia during laminaria removal procedure the previous day. Brevital is not approved for pediatric use. Deanna, at age 13, would be a pediatric patient.

Expert review indicated that the pre-operative physical examination performed on Deanna was "limited." Deanna was "reported to be 'uncooperative'" when laminaria was placed.

When the time came to remove the laminaria, Deanna was transferred to another facility for Lichtenberg to remove the laminaria under general anesthesia. During this process, Deanna's membranes were accidentally ruptured.

The destructive procedure upon the fetus was initiated September 5, and according to clinic records took 9 minutes to complete.

Deanna was noted as being discharged to the recovery room at 7:51, and was rated 9 favorable points of possible 14 for normal color, respiration, etc. But her pulse was

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...that the first heartbeats begin [about 22 days into the pregnancy?](#)

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130-135, per Lichtenberg's Clinical Summary written after Deanna's death.

Deanna was noted by monitors as lacking vitals at 7:53. The first resuscitative efforts were documented at 8:51, although Lichtenberg's Clinical Summary written after Deanna's death indicated that resuscitative efforts were made for the 1-hour period. No record of pupil dilation response was noted in the recovery room record, and "no effort was made to transport the patient to a more fully-equipped facility" during the hour they reported attempts to resuscitate her.

Deanna "never regained productive cardiac activity or consciousness." She was pronounced dead at 8:52. According to Lichtenberg's Clinical Summary, the coroner was immediately notified.

The lawsuit states that the nurse noted no vital signs registering on monitoring machines. The suit also stated that the facility lacked any protocol for dealing with cardiac-respiratory arrest.

Lichtenberg also noted, "Prior to the removal of the body from the premises, a total of 18 family members congregated in the clinic and were addressed by our clinic manager ... who was with me during my initial presentation to the patient's mother and sister." Although the clinic told family and the press that the probable cause of death was an amniotic fluid embolism, the autopsy showed that "Histologic studies showed no microscopic evidence of amniotic fluid embolism."

The autopsy reported congested lungs, a uterus full of clotted blood, and the cause of death and manner of death listed on death certificate as "undetermined," although "how injury occurred" was "expired after abortion."

Deanna's survivors alleged failure to monitor Deanna, lack of adequate resuscitation equipment, failure to properly resuscitate or transfer to hospital, lack of informed consent, and hiring unqualified staff. Edward Allred stated in his deposition that he found no fault with staff's handling of Deanna's case.

A report sent to the hospital that had referred Deanna read, "Date of service 9-5-92, Uneventful D&C, Thank you!" signed by Lichtenberg.

Sources: Cook County Circuit Court Case No. 94L05372; Chicago Tribune 9-6-92, 5-5-94; Chicago Sun-Times 9-6-92, 9-7-92; Southtown Economist 9-8-92; Daily Herald 9-6-92; The Wanderer 8-18-94; Daily Herald 9-7-92; Washington Times 6-4-94

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