



Anesthesia Caused Girl's Coma, Death

CHICAGO, Sep. 29, 2006

(AP) Lack of oxygen to the brain caused by anesthesia caused the death of a 5-year-old girl who never awoke from sedation during a visit to the dentist, the Cook County medical examiner's office said Thursday.

Diamond Brownridge died Wednesday at Children's Memorial Hospital. She had been on life support for four days after her visit to Little Angel Dental, a storefront clinic, to have some teeth filled and others capped.

The dentist, Dr. Hicham K. Riba, moved his family out of his home after receiving death threats, said a spokesman for a Chicago law firm the doctor has retained.

"There have been threatening calls made to his office, one of which was a bomb threat, and a caller threatened to come in and shoot up the office," Joshua Robbins said.

Robbins described Riba as "devastated for the family" of the girl.

Diamond's mother said that she was asked to leave the room during the half-hour procedure, and that when she returned, her daughter was unconscious in a dentist's chair.

Ommetress Travis said Thursday that she did not believe Riba or his assistant recognized that her daughter had stopped breathing and that Riba had told her children are "just like this after the sedation."

Travis, whose family retained an attorney while her daughter was on life support, expressed sympathy for Riba.

"I'm not angry at this dentist," she said. "I'm praying for his family. I think we're probably going through the same thing right now."

Pamela S. Menaker, a spokeswoman for the firm retained by Diamond Brownridge's family, said Thursday that a lawsuit had not been filed. The office obtained a court order this week to preserve dental records.

Questions still remain about the death, many centering on statements from family members that the girl received a triple dose of sedatives _ an oral agent, an intravenous drug and nitrous oxide gas.

Indru Punwani, the head of the pediatric dentistry department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said that dentists often sedate children for dental work but that a combination of the three medications would be unusual for children.

Neither the American Dental Association nor the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry was aware of any statistics on the number of children who die or suffer serious injury as a result of sedation.

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