Chicago teen's death sparks suit against abortionist

by Tim Murphy

Chicago, IL—The mother of a 13-year-old black girl who died following an abortion at a Chicago abortion mill has sued one of the country's largest abortion providers. Recently, attorneys for Dianne Adams, mother of Deanna Bell and administrator of her estate, filed a medical malpractice/wrongful death action against the Family Planning Associates Medical Group, a California-based corporation made up of nearly 50 abortion clinics and hospitals.

Named in the suit is Dr. Edward C. Allred, owner of Family Planning Associates Medical Group (FPA). Also named are Dr. E. Stephen Lichtenberg, who performed the abortion on Bell, nurse anesthetist Arthur Goode, and three other employees.

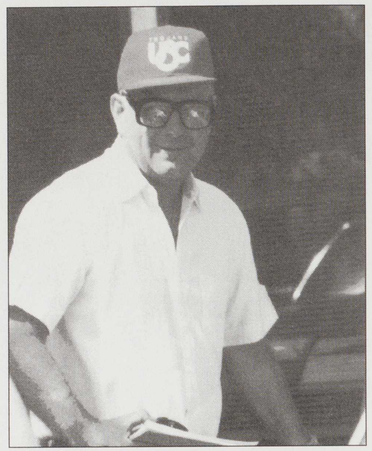
Deanna Bell, 13, died on Saturday, Sept. 5, 1992 shortly after undergoing an abortion at the Albany Medical-Surgical Center on Chicago's northwest side. She went into cardiac arrest and was pronounced dead in the recovery room at 8:52 a.m. Her body was then taken by police squadron to the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office.

The Albany Medical-Surgical Center, together with a downtown Chicago abortion mill, is part of Allred's Family Planning Associates Medical Group conglomerate. Abortions are performed at Albany through 25 weeks. Bell was in her 21st week of pregnancy at the time of her abonion.

The 71-page complaint filed by Bird and Associates, an Atlanta-based law firm, charged that Bell's death resulted from her being overdosed with anesthesia. The suit also claims that FPA failed to provide a supervising or consulting anesthesiologist to assist Lichtenberg or nurse-anesthetist Goode who administered the anesthesia. Other charges include failure to monitor Bell's recovery, failure to properly resuscitate her, not providing adequate resuscitation equipment, and failure to transport her to a fully equipped hospital. The complaint also states that the defendants negligently permitted non-M.D. personnel to perform laminaria insertion and removal on a 13-year-old patient with an immature cervix and a 20.5-week pregnancy.

"Patient uncooperative"

Attached to the lawsuit complaint are pre-litigation review reports of medical experts who examined Albany's records of Bell's abortion. They bring to light previously unknown facts surrounding her death. According to Albany's records, Bell was "uncooperative" when non-M.D. personnel inserted laminaria (dried seaweed sticks used to induce gradual dilation of the cervix) and dilapan (synthetic laminaria) on Thursday, Sept. 3, two days before her death.



Allred

On Sept. 4, non-M.D. personnel tried unsuccessfully to remove the laminaria from Bell, who was under local anesthesia. She was transported to FPA's downtown abortion mill, placed under general anesthesia, and the laminaria and dilapan were removed by Dr. Lichtenberg, who then inserted fresh laminaria to further dilate the cervix. During the 20-minute procedure, the membranes ruptured and 150-200 cc of amniotic fluid were recovered. The patient also lost 100 cc of blood in the struggle with the laminaria and dilapan. Dr. Lichtenberg's clinical summary noted 13-year-old Bell had "an immature cervix."

Records conflict

On Saturday, Bell returned to Albany where a D&E abortion was performed on her at 7:40 a.m. At 7:51 a.m. Bell was returned to the recovery room. At this point Albany's records conflict. At 7:53 a.m. the recovery room nurse was called to Bell's side and noted that no vital signs registered on monitoring machines. The patient had no pulse, blood pressure, or respiration, and had gone into cardiac arrest. However, the recovery room's score sheet on Bell's condition listed nine out of 14 favorable points (normal color, pulse, respiration, and so forth).

All efforts to resuscitate her failed and less than an hour later Bell was pronounced dead by Lichtenberg at Albany. No effort was made to transfer her to a more fully equipped facility.

Among the findings the expert witness made in his report, nurse anesthetist Arthur Goode gave 250 mg of Brevital anesthesia to 13 year-old Bell during the abortion, which lasted 11 minutes. A sufficient dose for a full-grown adult during that time period is 150 mg.

Bell was also given 400 mg of Brevital for 20 minutes during laminaria removal the day before. Under "precautions," the manufacturer of Brevital warns that "cardiorespiratory arrest may occur." The medical expert's findings also question how Bell could have been taken from the operating room to the recovery area, examined by personnel there who favorably noted normal color, pulse, and respiration, then have all monitors register no vital signs in just two minutes.

Tombstone placards

At least seven other maternal deaths have been attributed to FPA and Allred (see sidebar). Numerous other scandals surrounding Allred and his abortion business have been documented by the secular press and municipal health agencies, including health code violations, abortions performed on women not pregnant, and a 1979 investigation for allegedly paying $500 in kickbacks to a state-supported family planning agency for abortion referrals.

Although sidewalk counselors from the Pro-Life Action League were present at Albany the day of Bell's abortion and had spoken to relatives after she died, immediate attempts by the League to contact the family were unsuccessful. Two months later, a local crisis pregnancy center put the girl's aunt in contact with Legal Action for Women (LAW), a Pensacola-based pro-life referral organization helping women injured by abortion find legal assistance.

Mike Conroy of LAW referred relatives to the Atlanta-based Bird and Associates law firm and continued working closely with both the family and the firm through the long process of filing the case.

Immediately following the filing of the lawsuit, the Pro-Life Action League alerted the media that the case had been filed and announced a demonstration and press conference to be held at Albany. *The Chicago Tribune*, the first media outlet to report that the lawsuit had been filed, printed the facts surrounding the case.

At the picket and press conference, held two days after the case filing, 30 pro-lifers marched in front of Albany carrying signs including tombstone placards documenting FPA's eight maternal abortion deaths. Other tombstone placards documenting maternal abortion deaths were set up as a cemetery on the public easement across the street.

Pro-lifers blacked out

Although a number of radio and TV outlets were present, few reported the event. One station's evening newscast showed demonstrators carrying tombstone placards, but most focused on a NARRAL spokeswoman who accused pro-lifers of exploiting Bell's death. The local ABC affiliate took footage of the demonstration and interviewed pro-lifers but during the newscast reported only on the suit. File footage of a deserted Albany taken the Sunday after Bell had died was shown. No mention was made of the pro-life presence.

While reporting on the charges in the lawsuit, the commentator also noted FPA's claim that Bell died from an amniotic fluid embolism, "a rare, unavoidable" occurrence. The Cook County Medical Examiner's report noted, however, that no amniotic fluid was found in Bell's lungs and listed the cause of her death a "undetermined."

Coincidentally, following the death of Patricia Chacon, a 16-year-old Hispanic girl who died in 1985 after undergoing an abortion performed by Allred, his attorney claimed that Patricia's death was due to "amniotic fluid embolism." But a $14.5 million lawsuit filed by the Chacon family claimed that the "girl's uterus had been lacerated" and that "she had simply bled to death." A Los Angeles County coroner's report confirmed the family's charges. Surviving family members also claimed Patricia had received substandard treatment because of her race.

Pro-Life Action League Director Joseph M. Scheidler, who had been at Albany with sidewalk counselors the morning Bell died, labeled as "typical" the media blackout surrounding the case.

"That girl's death was not supposed to happen. A child lost her life, and they're dismissing her death as if it were the same as having a tooth pulled," he said. "There's plenty of evidence legal abortion isn't safe abortion. Her death at the hands of such a scandal-ridden outfit typically shows just how dangerous the abortion industry actually is." ■

Reprinted from *The Wanderer*

Girl's death at abortion clinic not isolated incident

By Jay Copp

Medical malpractice at abortion clinics is little known but frighteningly common, said an official of a Chicago pro-life group.

Administrator Lammon talks to teenage girl accompanying injured patient as attendants swing gurney towards ambulance.

Tim Murphy of the Pro-Life Action League said his group has documented more than 200 lawsuits against Chicago-area abortion clinics since abortion was legalized in 1973. The suits allege the botched abortions led to sterility, infection and even death.

"Abortion isn't safe — not only for the unborn child but also for the woman," said Murphy. "The procedure itself is not safe."

A suit filed May 3 alleges the wrongful death of a 13-year-old girl who sought an abortion at Family Planning Associates Medical Group, 5086 N. Elston Ave. Deanna Bell of Chicago, who was about five months pregnant, died in 1992 while at the clinic.

The suit was filed by Dianne Adams, Bell's mother. Named in the suit are Dr. Edward C. Allred of California, an owner of Family Planning Associates Medical Group, and five employees of the clinic.

Most of the 22 abortion clinics in the Chicago area have had medical malpractice suits, said Murphy. There were four abortion-related suits in Cook County against Family Planning Associates in recent years.

The number of suits would be even higher but many women, especially teen-agers, want their abortions to remain secret, said Murphy. Other women are dissuaded from filing suit by the legal release they sign before their abortion.

Suits against doctors who perform abortions are much more frequent than suits against obstetrician/gynecologists, he said. Nearly all the abortion-related suits never make it to trial, as is the case with medical malpractice suits in general.

About 300 women nationwide have died from abortion procedures since 1973, said Murphy.

Eight women have died from abortion complications at one of the nearly 50 abortion clinics of Family Planning Associates Medical Group, Murphy claims.

The two clinics of Family Planning Associates in Chicago target Hispanics and blacks in their advertisements, Murphy added.

Allred told the *San Diego Union* in 1980 that "population control is too important to be stopped by some right-wing pro-life types."

"Take the new influx of Hispanic immigrants," Allred was quoted as saying. "Their lack of respect for democracy and social order is frightening. I hope I can do something to stem the tide. I'd set up a clinic in Mexico for free if I could."

Allred also told the newspaper, "The Aid to Families with Dependent Children program is the worst boondoggle ever created. When a sullen black woman of 17 or 18 can decide to have a baby and get welfare and food stamps and become a burden to all of us, it's time to stop. In parts of South Los Angeles having babies for welfare is the only industry the people have."

Meanwhile, Joseph Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, criticized a bill passed by Congress May 12 that makes it a federal crime to blockade abortion clinics. Scheidler called the bill "biased and prejudicial" against pro-lifers and said that after President Clinton signs the bill, as expected, a pro-life group will test the law in court. ■

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