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FAMILY OF ORLEANS INMATE CALLS FOR INQUIRY AT - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - August 15, 2000 - page 10

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Relatives of an **Orleans Parish Prison** inmate who died of bacterial meningitis staged a rally Monday to demand an investigation by Criminal Sheriff Charles Foti and other authorities.

Eddie Kenneth Coleman, 40, was pronounced dead at Charity Hospital on Aug. 7, just more than a week after he was arrested on misdemeanor open- container and public drunkenness charges. His sister and brother-in-law said at the rally that some of Coleman's fellow inmates told them he was sick for days but did not receive medical attention until it was too late.

"There are inmates saying he was moaning on his bed the last three to four days," said activist J.T. Hill, organizer of the JoAnn Johnson Justice Committee, which was formed after Johnson, a diabetic, died in Sheriff's Office custody.

The day Coleman was taken to Charity, Hill said, inmates spent three hours trying to get help for him after he vomited and lost consciousness. Hill said inmates believed Coleman was already dead, and said a doctor at Charity told the family that he registered no brain waves from the time he arrived at the hospital to the time he died.

Coleman's brother-in-law, the Rev. Kevin Jackson, said Coleman had no known health problems before his arrest.

Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Mary Kennedy said Coleman, like all inmates, received a full medical screening and exam upon being admitted. The only problem that showed up, Kennedy said, was a history of alcohol abuse.

She said Coleman never spoke up during daily medical checks and never submitted a written "sick call" before early Aug. 6, when he was taken to the prison's medical observation unit and then to Charity. Hill said Coleman may have been too sick to speak up or to call his family to ask for help.

After it was determined that Coleman had meningitis, Kennedy said, all nearby prisoners were moved, screened and given antibiotics as a precaution. The area also was thoroughly cleaned and the inmates' clothes washed.

Coleman was later found to have bacterial meningitis, a noncontagious form of the disease, Kennedy said.

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