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ORLEANS INMATE WASN'T BEATEN, CORONER RULES - - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - September 17, 1999 - page B1

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An **Orleans Parish Prison** inmate who died this week at Charity Hospital had not been beaten and was a victim of meningitis, a disease usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection of the brain lining, the Orleans Parish coroner said Thursday.

"I don't think the Sheriff's Office did anything wrong," Dr. Frank Minyard said Thursday afternoon regarding the **death** of Bryan Monroe, 34.

Yvonne Hughes, the attorney who filed the lawsuit, said she wants to see hospital and prison records before responding to the coroner's conclusions, and has asked for those records in her lawsuit.

"That's why I asked for a temporary restraining order to make sure the records are preserved," she said.

Monroe died Tuesday, two days after being transferred from the prison, where he had been awaiting trial since his July 28 arrest on cocaine possession charges.

A lawsuit filed Wednesday on behalf of Monroe's wife, Hilda Monroe, said the prisoner was beaten by another inmate and received neither adequate medical treatment nor medication brought to the jail Friday afternoon by a family friend. Hilda Monroe said her husband told her in a phone conversation from the jail that he had broken ribs from the beating.

But Minyard said the autopsy ruled out the possibility that Monroe had been beaten and blamed the **death** on natural causes. The coroner agreed with Criminal Sheriff Charles C. Foti Jr. that Monroe was responsible for his failure to get appropriate treatment when he signed himself out of Charity Hospital last week against doctor's orders, according to medical records cited by the sheriff and the coroner.

"This is a natural **death** from meningitis that caused swelling of the brain," Minyard said. "He had no signs of bruises or other trauma. We examined his limbs, his chest and everything, and there were no signs of any broken bones."

Minyard said the Sheriff's Office and Charity Hospital, also named in the Civil District Court lawsuit for alleged inadequate treatment, never had the chance to give appropriate medication to Monroe because he wouldn't follow a Charity doctor's recommendation Sept. 7 that he be tested for meningitis.

"He needed a diagnosis, and because of his refusal to have a spinal tap, the hospital was not able to make the diagnosis," Minyard said. "And without the diagnosis, he couldn't get the medication for the meningitis."

Had Monroe approved the test and undergone subsequent treatment, Minyard said, "it's hard to say if he'd be alive today.

"It just depends on how bad the meningitis was," Minyard said. "They could have loaded him up on strong antibiotics and it's possible that he could have survived."

Minyard said the inmate probably already had the disease when he was first jailed 45 days before his death.

Hughes said Monroe was arrested when police came to his house on an unrelated complaint and allegedly found a crack pipe with nothing but residue.

Law-enforcement records show he was convicted for possession of cocaine in 1995.

It was still unclear Thursday night what illness or condition had been previously diagnosed in Monroe's case before his arrest.

Hilda Monroe said it was her understanding her husband was being treated for "fluid on the brain, a heart condition and a bleeding ulcer."

Hughes provided a list of pharmaceutical drugs, including two antibiotics and an anti-fungal medicine, that were taken to the hospital Friday afternoon by a family friend, the Rev. Ralph E. Williams.

Williams said sheriff's deputies at the jail refused to accept the medicine but took down information from the labels.

That is the prison policy, Minyard said.

"They can't accept medicine from outside the jail. So they copy down what he's taking and give it to him from their pharmacy," he said.

But Minyard said he did not know whether the medicine had been given him between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, when he was taken again to Charity Hospital complaining of headaches, Foti said.

Minyard said the question was moot, however, because he doubted that any of the medication brought to the jail was the kind of strong antibiotic needed to fight meningitis.

Hughes disputes Minyard's conclusion that the medication was not crucial and did not address meningitis-type symptoms. She said Hilda Monroe's description of her husband's symptoms sound as though some of the medication was targeting meningitis. She said she wants to find out from prison records whether he ever received them.

Monroe's family said he also had been complaining of seizures, but Minyard said there was no mention of seizures in Monroe's prison records.

"And he didn't have any seizures during his two stays at Charity Hospital," Minyard said.

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