



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Couple Pleads Guilty to Neglecting Their Son Mid-Trial

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Roseanna Danley, 42, and Jeffery Nelsen, 35, both of Strafford, Missouri pled guilty to two counts of neglect of a child in the middle of their jury trial. The defendants pled guilty to failing to provide medical care and dental care to their 23 month old son, after the State finished presenting all of their evidence but before closing arguments in the case. Both Danley and Nelsen were sentenced to seven years in the Missouri Department of Corrections as a result of their pleas.

During the trial, the jury heard that on June 7, 2014, the defendants brought their 23 month old son, Gabriel Nelsen, into the hospital for ear pulling. The nurse practitioner who saw Gabriel saw that he had cavities in almost every tooth and this tooth decay was the result of the defendants allowing Gabriel to go to bed every night with a milk bottle in his mouth. She further testified that she did not believe he had received any dental care, including brushing of teeth, nor had Gabriel seen a dentist.

On June 16, 2014, the defendants brought Gabriel to the emergency room again for vomiting and fever. Because they had to wait before they were seen by a doctor, they attempted to leave before treatment and a nurse had to physically block them and ask them to return to be seen by medical staff. Gabriel received IV fluids, but then vomited again in the emergency room. At the time, medical personnel recommended that Gabriel be admitted for observation and fluids, due to the danger of dehydration and to determine a cause for his symptoms. The defendants refused to allow Gabriel to be admitted and left the hospital. Because they had no ability to force the family to stay, the medical personnel agreed to let them leave against their medical advice. Before being discharged on June 17, 2014, the doctors and nurses specifically told the defendants that they needed to follow up with a pediatrician within one to two days, they

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needed to return for persistent vomiting, and provided them with a prescription for fifteen pills of Zofran, a medication to prevent nausea and vomiting. At that time, the nurse told them how important it was to bring Gabriel to come back if he remained sick, telling them “when kids go bad, they go bad quickly.”

Danley told police that on June 17, 2014, Gabriel didn't eat or drink anything, still had a fever, and was still vomiting. Nelsen told police that on June 17, 2014, Gabriel was still “run down” and vomited a few more times throughout the night.

On June 18, 2014, between 1000 and 1100, Amanda Sartin, a housekeeper with the extended stay motel where the family lived, was called to the room to replace the bedding because Gabriel had vomited on them. Sartin testified that she found Gabriel lying on a comforter on the floor. She said he was pale, had clearly recently vomited, was “burning up”, was completely unresponsive, wasn't making any noise, and wouldn't open his eyes. Sartin tried to give him some water and he wouldn't even open his mouth. She told Danley that she needed to take Gabriel to the hospital, and Danley responded that they “might” take him after Nelsen got home from the hospital. Sartin testified that Danley seemed unconcerned and was playing on her phone the entire time that Sartin was in the room. Sartin testified that she believed that Danley would take care of her son and, as a mother, could see how bad Gabriel's condition was.

On June 18, 2014, Nelsen told police that Gabriel vomited three or four more times in the evening. Danley claimed that on June 19, 2014, at approximately 0400, Gabriel vomited a dark green liquid. Danley said he was in “extreme pain”, the pain seemed “unbearable”, he was grabbing his stomach, crying, and tossing his body. Nelsen said that on June 19, 2014, approximately 0500, he witnessed Gabriel “dry heave”.

The police were called to the extended stay motel on June 19, 2014 at approximately 0900 and they found Gabriel unresponsive. Gabriel was taken to the emergency room. The doctor noted that his arms and legs were blue, his abdomen was swollen and hard, and his skin was mottled. The emergency room doctor who saw Gabriel on the day of his death attributed the blue tone and mottling to Gabriel's skin either indicated that Gabriel was “down” for longer than Danley claimed or that Gabriel was suffering from a massive infection. Medical staff was unable to resuscitate Gabriel and he died.

An autopsy was conducted on Gabriel's body. The medical examiner found that Gabriel was dehydrated, his abdomen was hard and swollen, that he had an infection that spread throughout his abdomen and to his liver, lungs, and heart. The medical

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examiner determined that Gabriel died of a ruptured appendix, peritonitis and sepsis. The medical examiner opined that the infection was several days old based on the extent of the infection. The medical examiner also found that Gabriel had extensive tooth decay. The medical examiner testified he received the result of Gabriel's toxicology which showed negative for any ibuprofen or acetaminophen, which contradicted the defendants' claims that they had been giving Gabriel Tylenol and Motrin every six hours.

Finally, the jury heard from Dr. Diane Lipscomb, the director of the pediatric floor at Mercy Hospital. She testified that the hospital could have treated Gabriel, even if he had been brought in after his appendix burst. She further testified that, Gabriel's condition would have continued to deteriorate after he left the hospital and would have gotten much sicker after his appendix burst in that he would have continued to vomit, would have been unable to keep anything down, that Gabriel would have been extremely lethargic, and his abdomen would have become swollen and hard.

After Dr. Lipscomb testified and the State rested, but before closing arguments were heard, the defendants each agreed to plead guilty to two counts of the class C felony of neglect of a child in relation to the condition of Gabriel's teeth and his death. They both were sentenced to seven years in the Missouri Department of Corrections in exchange for their plea of guilty.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Stephanie Wan and Amanda Johnson. It was investigated by the Springfield Police Department and Detective Cody Williams was the lead investigator assigned to the case.

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