

Autopsy confirms girl's coma, death after dentist visit caused by anesthesia

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — 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.

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.

MCWATTERS

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mother, Jacqueline Wayman, sat behind him.

"The jury should drop dead," Wayman said as she entered a courthouse elevator after the verdict. "My son did never kill them people."

Wiggins' aunt, Barbara Lorenz, said she was "relieved" as she left the courtroom with Wiggins' mother, Karen, on her arm.

"He got what he deserved," said Lorenz, who is from Ohio.

Shaking, Karen Wiggins showed reporters a picture of Wiggins and her children at Disney World. The photo was taken two months before her death.

As hugging, teary-eyed spectators filtered out of the courtroom Thursday, Udell said he believed McWatters' own tears Thursday sprang from a "consciousness of guilt."

"It really doesn't matter — they've already found him guilty," he said.

After hearing closing arguments Wednesday, the jurors deliberated for about five hours and then went home for the evening at about 6 p.m. The jury, consisting of 10 men and two women, began

"Obviously, we're very pleased, but we need to move into the next phase, so we're focusing our energy on that now. It's a good feeling. You feel some level of comfort."

Tom Bakkedahl, prosecutor

deliberating again at 8:40 a.m. Thursday and reached a verdict at 11 a.m.

The prosecutors and defense rested their cases Monday afternoon — the defense without calling a single witness.

Throughout six days of testimony, prosecutors painted McWatters as a calculating killer who lured Bradley, Wiggins and Caughey to their deaths.

All three women were found unclothed from the waist down with their shirts shoved up into their armpit area, bras pushed over their breasts. The disarray of the victims' clothes and the fact that they were strangled led a forensic pathologist to conclude they were sexually assaulted and then murdered.

McWatters eventually admitted to killing the three women during a June 23, 2004, confession. He said he was having sex with each of them when he "lost it."

Because of the bodies' extensive state of decomposition, no concrete forensic evidence was collected from any of the crime scenes.

The jury will next hear attorney arguments in the penalty phase of the trial starting Tuesday and then recommend a sentence. Martin County Circuit Judge Larry Schack must ultimately decide whether McWatters will receive the death penalty.

The defense plans to have Aleman, Dr. Michael C. Rioridan and a former teacher of McWatters' testify on his behalf during the penalty phase, defense attorney Bob Udell said Thursday.

The defense also will play audio from a recorded jailhouse telephone conversation between McWatters and Wayman.

"Hopefully, somebody will realize that there is a person underneath there, that he isn't a sociopath, that he does feel his victims' pain," Udell said after the verdict was read. "Right now, we're going to try to save his life. That's all we have to do."

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