

POLICE

Multnomah County Sued Over Inmate Overdose

Family claims methadone drug substituted for chronic pain medicine

(AP)—Multnomah County has been hit with a \$1.3 million lawsuit by the family of a jail inmate who died of a methadone overdose in his cell last month.

The family of Nick Baccelleri said jail health employees substituted his regular medication for a chronic pain problem with substantial dosages of methadone.

The medication substitution was made over Baccelleri's objections, according to the complaint, which was filed Thursday in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

According to the Multnomah County Health Department, which runs the jail's medical services, its investigation into the death uncovered no reason to reprimand health workers.

County officials declined to discuss other findings, saying they fell under medical confidentiality protections.

When Baccelleri checked himself in to serve a 30-day sentence for drunken driving on the morning of March 31, he brought the painkiller OxyContin and other medical

prescriptions, according to the lawsuit. Fewer than 48 hours later, he was found dead in his cell at the Inverness jail.

He had no experience taking methadone, a synthetic opiate that

What (health workers) really did was make Nick a guinea pig.

—Michael Shinn, attorney for the family of Nick Baccelleri, man who died of a methadone overdose in Multnomah County's Inverness Jail

helps control addiction and pain, said Michael Shinn, the family's lawyer.

In refusing to give Baccelleri OxyContin, "what (health workers) really did was make Nick a guinea

pig," he said.

The lawsuit said the jail's medical staff failed to adequately monitor Baccelleri's reaction to the drug, which would have allowed doctors to detect an adverse reaction.

Baccelleri, 48, suffered from several medical problems. His chronic pain, Shinn said, dated to a car wreck in Guatemala 20 years ago, when he was with a church group aiding communities after an earth-

quake.

His injuries from the crash were so severe that doctors were forced to place metal rods in his legs and arms, Shinn said. The pain never went away and Baccelleri was heavily dependent on OxyContin, Shinn said.

On the night of April 1, Baccelleri called his mother from a phone inside the Inverness jail, Shinn said. He was distraught. He was upset that the jail health workers had refused to give him his OxyContin and feared that he was taking the wrong kind of medicine, Shinn said.

Shortly before 7 a.m. the next day, a nurse walked into Baccelleri's cell to give him an insulin shot for diabetes and found him dead.

Shinn said Dr. Jim Bane, the jail's medical director, made a tearful apology when he later visited the Portland home of the inmate's mother.

Shinn said Dr. Bane told Baccelleri's mother, Evelyn, his sister and brother-in-law that county officials had told him not to make the visit.

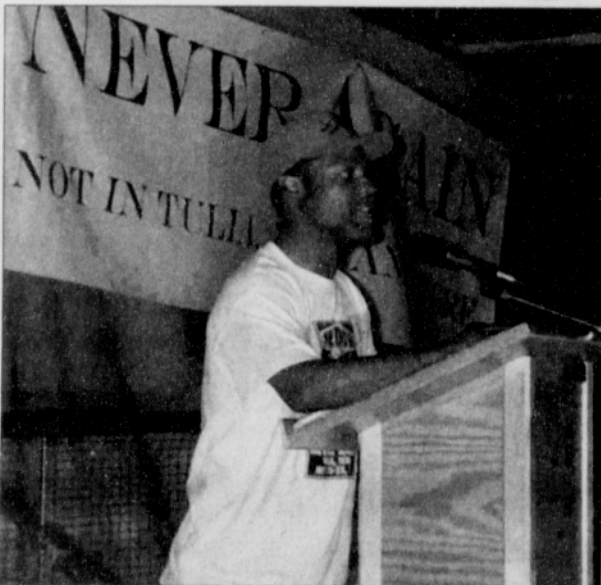
"But he told them, 'I can't live with this and I can't sleep,'" Shinn said. "He showed up with a chaplain. He was crying."

Lillian Shirley, the health department's director, confirmed that Dr. Bane visited the family but said she didn't know what he told them.

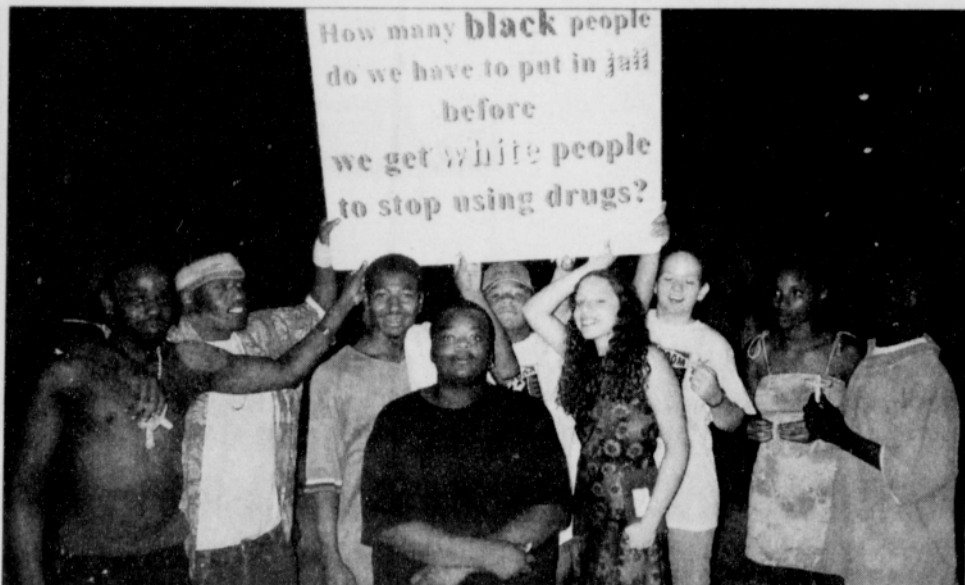
Dr. Bane declined to discuss the visit.

Texas Drug Bust Debacle Investigated

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A candlelight vigil on July 22, 2001 in Tulia, Texas commemorated the town's infamous drug raid. Tulia NAACP President Freddie Brookings (left), speaking at the rally, has a son serving a lengthy prison sentence. The crowd rallied peacefully and carried signs declaring an abuse of justice. A young girl wears a T-shirt emblazoned with the protest organization's title "Friends of Justice."



(AP)—The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee will investigate a drug probe that snared dozens of black residents of Tulia in

1999, based on testimony of a now-discredited police officer, a lawmaker said. Meanwhile, the judge who conducted evi-

dentiary hearings on four of the convictions wrote in a court filing that it would be a travesty of justice for them to stand because of undercover officer Tom Coleman's "blatant perjury."

Coleman's work led to the arrest of 46 people, 39 of whom were black, in July 1999. Civil rights advocates have claimed the busts were racially motivated. Coleman is white.

No decision has been made on what kind of inquiry Republican Rep. James Sensenbrenner will do, committee spokesman Jeff Lungren said after the announcement by Rep. John Conyers of Michigan.

The probe, announced last Wednesday at a

forum on Capitol Hill, came at the request of Conyers and two other Congressional Black Caucus members, all Democrats: Reps. Sheila Lee Jackson of Houston and Charles Rangel of New York.

Tulia resident Freddie Brookings Sr., whose son is in the fourth year of 20-year sentence, said he welcomed congressional scrutiny.

"I view it as a great step in the right direction," he said.

Retired state District Judge Ron Chapman ruled during evidentiary hearings in March that Coleman lacked credibility as a witness and said he would recommend that 38 convictions be overturned and new trials ordered.

No Leads in Jam Master Jay Slaying

(AP)—The city and music industry have offered more than \$60,000 in rewards for information on the slaying of rap legend Jam Master Jay. But nearly six months after his death, the identity of his killer and the motive behind the shooting remain a mystery.

New York Police Department sources close to the case concede the investigation has been hampered by dead-end leads and uncooperative witnesses.

"No one in that industry wants to be a rat," said one of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"We're not at a standstill," countered police Lt. Alfred Murphy. "We're still hopeful."

Some blame that lack of cooperation on heavy-handed police tactics.

The 37-year-old victim, whose real name was



Rap legend Jam Master Jay, a.k.a. Jason Mizell, member of hip hop pioneers Run-DMC. Nearly six months after his execution-style slaying, the identity of the killer and the motive remain a mystery. (AP Photo)

Jason Mizell, was killed on Oct. 30 by a gunman - masked and wearing a black sweat suit and black hat - who fired a single .40-caliber bullet into his head in the lounge of his recording studio in Queens.



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Men Wanted in Fast Food Armed Robberies

Portland Police Bureau Robbery Detectives, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, are asking for the public's help in identifying and apprehending three men involved in a series of "take-over-style" armed robberies at Portland fast food restaurants.

The crimes occurred at 10 locations between Jan. 29 and May 4, stretching from Southeast 28th and Powell to Northeast 58th and Sandy to Saint Johns.

The suspects enter a business and take control of the employees and patrons by displaying or simulating handguns. They then take money from the business and flee the area on foot.

The suspects are described as black males.

One is thought to be in his early 30s to 40s, 5 feet 8 inches to 5 feet 10 inches tall, 200 pounds, with a medium complexion and possibly a thin mustache. Police said he is probably a heavy drinker based on an odor of alcohol in one case and discolored "alcoholic's eyes" in another.

The second man is described as in his 20s to late 30s, 5 feet 10 to six feet tall, 160 pounds, with a wide nose and a rough light complexion with possible pock marks and dark spots or large freckles under his eyes. A victim described him as having "indented freckles around his eyes that looked almost like burns."

The third man is described as in his late 20s, 5 feet 8 to six feet tall and 160 pounds.

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, reported to Crime Stoppers, that leads to an arrest in this case, or any unsolved felony crime, and you need not give your name. Call Crime Stoppers at 503-823-4357.