



# Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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Date: July 13, 2022

To: Captain Anthony Paonessa, Commander  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Office  
Correctional Services Unit  
651 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

Re: In-Custody Death – Maria Luisa Gonzalez (DOB 6/29/1957)  
SSO Report No. MJD 2019-0286650  
Date of Incident – August 12, 2019

The above case was referred to this office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of inmate Maria Luisa Gonzalez while in the Sacramento County Main Jail on August 12, 2019. The case was submitted to the District Attorney's Office September 3, 2021.

Maria Luisa Gonzalez was arrested and booked into the Sacramento County Main Jail on January 24, 2017, on federal charges of possession with intent to distribute controlled substances.

On August 12, 2019, Gonzalez was housed in cell #10 in the 100 Pod with her cellmate. At approximately 10:02 p.m., Gonzalez and her cellmate were both inside cell #10. Her cellmate alerted an inmate worker that Gonzalez was having a seizure inside the cell. The inmate worker was in the dayroom area and pressed the emergency button at the 100 Pod door. Sacramento Sheriff's Office Deputy Ambar Vicente-Rivas answered the alert and was told by Gonzalez' cellmate that Gonzalez was having a seizure inside her cell.

Sergeant Eric Steindorf and Deputy Sarah Kisch immediately responded to cell #10 from the control room. They found Gonzalez on the bottom bunk. Gonzalez was lying on her back and vomiting. Deputy Kisch entered the cell and rolled Gonzalez onto her side in a recovery position. Sergeant Steindorf immediately radioed for medical assistance. Gonzalez was breathing but was not responsive to questions.

Before medical personnel arrived at cell #10, Gonzalez became responsive. Gonzalez said to Deputy Kisch, "I am really sweaty. I'm going to throw up." Deputy Kisch told Gonzalez medical staff were on their way. As Deputy Kisch was saying this, Gonzalez appeared to fall asleep. Gonzalez was snoring so heavily that Deputy Kisch was concerned Gonzalez was

breathing in some of her own vomit.

At approximately 10:05 p.m., Main Jail medical staff arrived at cell #10. Nurses Ana Sanchez and Brenda Le assessed Gonzalez inside her cell. Gonzalez again regained consciousness. The nurses asked Gonzalez if she was able to sit up and get into the wheelchair. Gonzalez replied, "I don't know. Going to throw up."

Deputy Kisch told Gonzalez she would help her sit up if she thought she was able to do so. Gonzalez reached her left arm out towards Deputy Kisch and allowed Deputy Kisch to assist her into a sitting position. Gonzalez then began to vomit into a towel she was holding in her right hand. When Gonzalez stopped vomiting, the nurses asked her to get into the wheelchair so she could be taken to the medical floor. Gonzalez looked at Deputy Kisch and told her "I feel like I'm going to diarrhea." Deputy Kisch told Gonzalez that it was okay if she did, but she needed to get to the medical floor so she could be treated for whatever was making her sick. Gonzalez asked for a towel and began to vomit again.

After Gonzalez finished vomiting, Deputy Kisch began to assist Gonzalez into the wheelchair. As she did so, Gonzalez took a step towards the toilet and started to vomit again. Nurse Le pushed the wheelchair closer towards Gonzalez so she could sit down and vomit. Once Gonzalez was done vomiting, Deputy Erik Fuerstenberger escorted her to the medical floor by pushing her in the wheelchair.

At approximately 10:28 p.m., Nursing Supervisor Tom Williams requested an ambulance because Gonzalez had again become unresponsive and was not registering a detectable pulse. The nursing staff began CPR, and an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) was applied. According to Williams, the AED showed Gonzalez was in ventricular tachycardia.<sup>1</sup>

At approximately 10:37 p.m., Sacramento City Fire Department medics arrived. The medics transported Gonzalez to Sutter General Hospital. Deputy Jabari James rode with Gonzalez to the hospital. At approximately 11:17 p.m., Dr. Sam Lam, M.D., a doctor at Sutter General Hospital, pronounced Gonzalez deceased.

Multiple inmates in the jail were interviewed. Several recalled seeing Gonzalez clutch her chest and complain of chest pain at various times. The inmates also stated Gonzalez had diabetes and would often go for jail medical treatment.

Inmates who were interviewed also described seeing Gonzalez making phone calls on the day of her death. Deputy Vicente-Rivas was assigned to listen to Gonzalez's phone calls. In one call, Gonzalez talked to a friend about her pending case and how much her health was deteriorating. In a second phone call, Gonzalez spoke with another friend about how she was talking to her attorney about her health.

Deputy Ryan Toyama reviewed the medical floor logbook. The logbook showed Gonzalez had visited the medical floor four times within the two weeks prior to the incident. This included a visit on the morning of the incident. Gonzalez was seen regarding a complaint of chest pains on

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<sup>1</sup> Ventricular tachycardia means the heart is spasming and not beating correctly.

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, August 7<sup>th</sup>, and August 11<sup>th</sup>. On August 12, 2019, at approximately 10:54 a.m., Gonzalez saw a nurse practitioner about epigastric pain. A physical examination was conducted which revealed some mild epigastric pain, and Gonzalez returned to her cell.

Main Jail Surveillance video was reviewed. The events as shown in the video occurred in the same manner as described in the reports. Footage of the 7 West 100 Entry Door depicts cell #10 with the door closed and multiple female inmates in the pod area. At one point, the inmate worker approaches the cell door and looks inside. She immediately runs towards the camera to alert staff. Footage also shows medical staff and the fire department performing chest compressions on Gonzalez and eventually exiting with Gonzalez on a gurney.

An autopsy was performed by Forensic Pathologist Keng-Chih Su, M.D., from the Sacramento County Coroner's Office. The cause of death was listed as atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup> The manner of death was categorized as natural.

No evidence of criminal misconduct by any member of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office is presented or suggested in any of the supporting reports. Accordingly, the District Attorney's Office will take no further action in this matter.

Cc: Sacramento County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Janae Galovich  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Office Sergeant Quis Formoli  
Kimberly Gin, Sacramento County Coroner's Office  
Sacramento County Office of Inspector General

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<sup>2</sup> Atherosclerosis is a hardening and narrowing of the arteries. It can put blood flow at risk as the arteries become blocked.