



Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 26, 2020

TO: Captain Charles Meeks, Commander
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
Correctional Services Unit
651 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

RE: In-Custody Death – Kenton Ballard
SSD Report No. 18-68180
Date of Incident: February 28, 2018

The above case was referred to this office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of Sacramento County Main Jail inmate Kenton Ballard on February 28, 2018.

Ballard was booked into the Sacramento County Main Jail (SCMJ) on February 7, 2018, for possession of drug paraphernalia and a probation revocation. He denied chest pain, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, recent injuries, or serious medical conditions. On February 23, 2018, Ballard was transferred to the Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center (RCCC).

Sacramento County Sheriff's Deputy Kraig Brown was working as a transportation officer at RCCC on the morning of February 28, 2018. He and other deputies were responsible for transporting inmates from RCCC to SCMJ for court appearances. Kenton Ballard was one of multiple inmates scheduled for transport. Deputy Brown first contacted Ballard at the RCCC holding tank prior to transport to SCMJ. Ballard's appearance and demeanor appeared normal, and he did not report any medical difficulties to Deputy Brown. Ballard was transported to SCMJ and placed in a holding tank without incident.

Sacramento County Sheriff's Deputy Patrick Rowe was working at SCMJ. At approximately 6:57 a.m., Deputy Rowe was notified of a "man down" in a transport cell. Deputy Rowe and a nurse responded. Deputy Rowe opened the cell door and observed Ballard lying on the floor. Deputy Rowe saw no visible signs of trauma to Ballard's face or body and observed no blood on his person or immediate vicinity.

Deputy Rowe asked Ballard about his condition. Ballard appeared confused, and quietly mumbled that his stomach hurt. Deputy Rowe and the nurse removed Ballard from the cell and assisted him in sitting up against a wall. Deputy Rowe asked Ballard what was wrong. Ballard indicated he could not “keep anything down.” The nurse and additional medical staff assessed Ballard’s vitals. Deputy Rowe and the nurse placed Ballard in a wheelchair and took him to the nurse’s station. During that time, Ballard appeared to become more coherent. Once at the nurse’s station, Ballard requested and was given water to drink and he appeared more alert. Deputy Rowe left Ballard at the nurse’s station in the care of the nurse and another deputy.

Ballard told medical staff he had been experiencing stomach and neck pain for approximately two weeks and diarrhea for a week and a half. An examination determined Ballard had a thready pulse and his blood pressure was unobtainable. A test for occult blood during a rectal exam was strongly positive. At approximately 7:20 a.m., a Code 2 ambulance was requested for Ballard. Shortly thereafter, the request was upgraded to Code 3.

At approximately 7:35 a.m., Sacramento County Sheriff’s Deputy Tyler Pearson was assigned to accompany Ballard in the ambulance from the jail to the Sutter Medical Center. At approximately 7:41 a.m., paramedics arrived at the nurse’s station inside the jail. They provided medical attention to Ballard and wheeled him on a gurney to an ambulance. Ballard was conscious and speaking with paramedics in the ambulance.

At approximately 8:00 a.m., Ballard was transferred to the Sutter Medical Center Emergency Room. He was still conscious and responsive to questions from medical staff. Ballard stated he was experiencing pain all over his body, especially his stomach and back. Deputy Pearson observed Ballard writhing around in his hospital bed. According to Deputy Pearson, once the medical staff gave him pain medication, Ballard fell asleep. Meanwhile, Deputy Pearson observed the medical staff performing medical tests on Ballard.

Ballard began yelling for help at approximately 10:18 a.m. According to Deputy Pearson, the physician had difficulty treating Ballard due to his writhing and yelling, and Ballard was given additional pain medication. As the doctor prepared to draw additional blood from him, Ballard’s breathing slowed and stopped. The doctor and staff performed CPR and intubated Ballard. A short time later, Ballard was stabilized, and medical care and testing continued. Once test results came back, medical staff told Deputy Pearson at approximately 11:05 a.m. that Ballard’s chance of survival was low. Medical treatment continued.

At approximately 12:03 p.m., the Sheriff’s Department released Ballard from custody. Ballard remained at the hospital, and Sheriff’s deputies had no further contact with him. Ballard died at approximately 1:48 p.m.

Following his death, multiple inmates were interviewed. Inmates who observed Ballard on the bus from RCCC to SCMJ indicated generally that Ballard appeared sick and was breathing abnormally. Inmates who observed Ballard in the holding tank at SCMJ indicated generally that Ballard did not appear well and was observed groaning on the floor. An inmate pressed the emergency button, deputies and a nurse responded, and Ballard was taken away on a stretcher.

The report of the Sacramento County Coroner indicated the cause of Ballard's death was disseminated cryptococcosis. There was no evidence of trauma. According to a memorandum by Dr. Grant G. Nugent, MD, Medical Director of Correctional Health Services, disseminated cryptococcosis is a disease caused by a fungus. The Sacramento County District Attorney's Office Laboratory of Forensic Services examined a sample of Ballard's femoral blood. The laboratory determined Ballard's blood contained lidocaine. The Coroner's report indicated the presence of lidocaine was "most likely related to resuscitation procedure."

Ballard died from a disease and no evidence of criminal misconduct is presented or suggested in any of the supporting reports. The District Attorneys' Office will take no further action in this matter.

cc: Lieutenant Gail Vasquez, Sacramento County Sheriff's Office
Mark Evenson, Office of the Inspector General
Kimberly Gin, Sacramento County Coroner's Office