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MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Abortion staff ignores baby boy born alive?

Woman pleads for help with 'Rowan' after delivering son in clinic restroom

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By Ron Strom

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A woman who was scheduled to have her 22-week-along pregnancy ended at a Florida abortion clinic instead delivered the baby alive in a restroom and says her pleading for help from medical staff went unheeded, even when an employee saw that the tiny boy was moving.

The mother, Angele, who asked that her last name not be used, is now considering legal action against the facility. She is being represented by [Liberty Counsel](#), a nonprofit pro-life and religious-liberty legal organization.

(Story continues below)

The woman chose the EPOC Clinic of the [Orlando Women's Center](#) in Orlando, Fla., because employees there had convinced her that her unborn baby would feel no pain during the procedure and because the "staff seemed caring," Angele told WND.

WorldNetDaily obtained a narrative Angele wrote that describes the two days, April 1 and 2, she went to the clinic after traveling to Florida from her home state.

"I counseled with a pretty and petite younger black woman who has a small son," Angele wrote of her first visit. "Her name began with an L. I do not remember her full name. She explained the process of laminaria insertion. I asked her other questions such as, will they inject saline or urea into the amniotic sac? I was concerned that it would hurt the baby as it generally (from what I've read) burns the skin and lungs. I expressed my concerns that he not suffer or feel anything."

The purpose of inserting laminaria is to dilate the cervix overnight in preparation for the abortion. Angele explained she chose the "labor and delivery process" for her abortion "as opposed to partial birth or having to dismember the child to retrieve him from the uterus/birth canal."

Angele, who is in her 30s, says she was given Valium "to relax me for the laminaria insertion."

"The injection burned a lot as it went in. ... The discomfort was distracting. I still felt the 'lams' as they were being inserted. Dr. Perper told me to relax my muscles and noted that my cervix was slightly soft. I

asked him what that meant and he said it was good."

Digoxin is a drug injected into an unborn baby to cause his or her heart to stop in preparation for what amounts to a stillborn birth. Angele says despite having asked for it, she did not receive the digoxin injection, which she surmises caused the baby to be born alive.

Referring to the digoxin injection, Angele told WND: "They didn't do it."

She says she overheard staff talking about "dig-ing" her – injecting the digoxin – but, after taking a sonogram initially and then quickly taking the machine to another room, the staff, she says, failed to return it to her room. A sonogram machine is used to guide the needle into the unborn baby's heart.

Part of Angele's concern prior to going to Florida was that the baby would be born alive, and she asked clinic personnel beforehand how that is handled.

"I wanted it to be as humane and painless as possible for my son," she said, choking back tears. "They told me they would guide a needle directly into his heart and it would put him to sleep, and he wouldn't feel anything."

Harry Perper, M.D., is the doctor who inserted the laminaria, a man Angele described as "a very fast-moving, hyperactive type of person."

Angele says the staff then gave her some medication to take early the next morning and told her to return the following day.

Wrote Angele: "My friend and I took a taxi back to our hotel. We rested up a bit, changed and walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner. That night, all night off and on I could feel the baby still moving. I told my friend this worried me. I remember thinking it must take time to slow down and stop his heart. I was still a little 'out of it' from the medicine and just figured I must have been mistaken about how the digoxin was supposed to work. He was still moving when I went to sleep. I was concerned and started to call the after-hours line, but again second-guessed myself."

In the 'delivery room'

The next day, Angele says, she took three pills meant to induce labor at 5 a.m. and another at 8 a.m. before arriving at the clinic shortly before 9.

"I waited outside, cramping and crying, for the clinic to open," Angele explained. "My contractions were close. I had been having them for hours. I knocked repeatedly at the door. There was a burgundy truck in the parking lot. Ten to 15 minutes later, Debbie opened the door and let me in.

"I was directed to 'the room.' I had been there for a moment the day before and thought it to be a waiting room for family or driving companions. It had a leather sofa and a fabric sofa, both with a white blanket stretched across the seat cushions, a small television and a few magazines."

However, noted Angele, "It was not a waiting area – it was the 'delivery room.' It was, of course, very cold."



Baby Rowan

After being given a wet blanket and a heating pad, Angele says, she was told the doctor wouldn't be in until 2 p.m. – "and that even if I had delivered by then I would need to stay until I could be examined."

Wrote Angele: "My contractions became stronger and more frequent very rapidly. I called for [staff member] Violene, thinking it was time to be moved into another room and wanting to know if I could have anything for pain. She said that medication would stop the contractions and for me to stay right there and again, she would be back. I told her it was almost time; I could just tell, and she told me I was not at all ready. She left. I began to bleed."

After going to the bathroom, Angele says, "I came back to the sofa, (they both really smelled awful), wrapped up in the wet and sour-smelling blanket, then decided it was better without it. I rocked back and forth on my hands and knees, trying to hold the heating pad to my stomach to both relieve the pain and try to stay warm. I was looking down and saw little smears and spots of dried blood on the floor and an old cotton ball with blood on it by the fabric-covered sofa across from me. Noticing how dirty it was and how no one was in the room or even nearby in the hallway began to make me nervous and uncomfortable. I went right back to the powder room and began to try to push a lot. I thought it might help since I was told I was not nearly ready to deliver."



Crying out in pain, Angele says she could feel a contraction coming: "In one agonizing push, I felt and heard something come out. Then immediately another push. I was weak. I just held my head in my hands for a moment. Then I decided to stand up. I looked. There was my baby, the whitish cord and what I thought surely must be the placenta."

"I started sobbing and lay down in the floor. I stared and stared at my son. I was horrified that I had just had him in a commode."

Born alive

Angele explained what happened next to her and her boy, whom she named Rowan:

His right leg moved. He curled up a bit like he was cold; I screamed for Violene! No one came. I managed to get to the doorway, pants down, blood everywhere and yelled again. I went back to my baby. I heard her say she'd be right there.

I showed her Rowan, told her he was alive and moving and to call 911! She took a quick look, said he's not moving now and she'd be back to take care of things while walking out. I called her again. I was touching Rowan softly and he moved again. I called her back. Rowan jumped, I think startled by the loud sound of my calling for help. I showed her that he was moving and alive. I begged her to hurry and call 911, now!

She said for me to lie down and she would get her supervisor. No one came.

I continued to try to caress and comfort my son by rubbing his back, tummy and chest. I stroked his precious little head and kept telling him I loved him and we would be OK. I was afraid to move him because I did not want to do anything that might end up hurting him. I pushed my pinky into his little hand and his fingers curled around me. Still no one was coming. I was terrified but trying not to let him know I was scared. I kept telling him what a beautiful son he was and that we were going to be safe soon.

Angele says she then figured out a way to call for help.



"I left Rowan for two seconds, grabbed the phone, jumped back into the bathroom to be with him, calling my girlfriend 'Sharon' at the same time," she wrote. "I told her Rowan was alive and no one was helping us to please call an ambulance to the clinic immediately and hung up.

"I stayed beside Rowan talking to him, telling him how strong he was being and how proud I was of him. I told him God must really want us to be together for him to make it through everything he had just

been through and that Mommy was so sorry but so happy to have a chance to love him. I told him he was a strong little miracle and that I couldn't wait for him to meet his brother and sister. I just kept touching him, trying to warm him with my hands and talking to him so he would not feel any more afraid than he already must.

"Then Rowan stopped moving."

At that point, Angele says, she "rocked him and prayed" before bathing the baby and cutting the umbilical cord.

Wrote Angele: "He was perfect, slightly pale and a little translucent. His eyebrows were pale but wide and well-defined. You could see little hairs on his face and head. He had the tiniest little fingernails and toenails. I noticed they already had a little bit of growth. His mouth was lovely. He was this perfectly formed one pound, one ounce human being. He was beautiful. He had been so strong.

"I wrapped him in [a] blue pad instead of one of the wet blankets. I just kept kissing him and telling him I loved him so much. I told him I was sorry I couldn't get anyone to help us and I was so sorry for ever coming here."

At that point, Angele says, staff member Debbie came in a demanded to have the baby. Angele refused.

"Oddly, she came back within two or three minutes," Angele wrote. "She was more irritated and insistent than before. I was irritated that she was rushing me and that she did not seem to be in such a hurry when Rowan was alive. Where was she when Violene was supposedly going to get her and we needed her help? She asked again to take him. I flatly refused her. I could tell she was angry. I did not care. I told her that I expected her to leave me alone so I could finish praying with Rowan and that we needed privacy."

Angele says she then went back in the bathroom and blocked the door firmly with her back so no one could bother her.

Wrote Angele: "I was staring at my son, crying softly and noticing the dried blood on the walls. I felt so bad. I felt so helpless. I had been so wrong to come here and yet I felt so lucky to have my son born alive. I wanted to fix and change everything once I saw his precious little face and body. All we needed was someone to get us to safety. I felt so awful that the only thing I could do was tell him we were going to be OK and that would be together forever, that we were strong and a good team.

"I wondered if babies went immediately to heaven. Are they immediately given wisdom, perspective and understanding? Could Rowan see that I loved him? Could he see that I wanted him with me and that I tried to help him stay with me? Could he see everything that happened while he was here?"

Angele's friend "Sharon" arrived and reportedly agreed that Rowan "was a gorgeous little baby."

Surprisingly, Angele said, the police came to the clinic instead of an ambulance.

"The police asked if I would like them to take Rowan to the funeral home," she wrote. "I told them that I had made previous arrangements for him to be picked up by the funeral director."

Angele says her friend overheard a staff member saying she did not see the baby move, a contention that angered the distressed mother.

"I saw Violene one more time, and I was furious after what 'Sharon' told me," Angele wrote. "I spoke to her telling her how little I appreciated them telling the police my child was not alive. I stared hard at her and said, 'Violene you saw him moving. That is when you were supposedly going to get your manager and "take care of it." You stayed away until Rowan died. I don't care what you say, you and I both know he was very much alive. We know the truth.' She said nothing and turned away.

"They gave 'Sharon' a bag with my medicine and we left. Oddly enough, they no longer needed me to be seen by the doctor at 2 p.m.," Angele wrote, saying the staff just wanted her "to leave as quickly as possible."

'I didn't see any other way out'

Angele, who is divorced, is the mother of a son and daughter.

It took weeks of counseling before she made the decision to have an abortion, she explained. "I didn't see any other way out," Angele told WND.

Angele explained that she researched the various second-trimester abortion methods to determine which would be best in her situation.

"Although 'labor and delivery' is most difficult on the mother," she explained, "it seemed to be the best choice for my son. And it would allow the opportunity for my son to be born whole, stillborn, and I could hold him and grieve him and have him cremated."

Angele says she named her baby ahead of time and made a lot of plans because, she said, "I wanted him to go from my tummy to heaven in the most dignified way possible."

A Christian, Angele told WND: "I chose Bible verses for his service and everything."

Angele says she wants the government to do an autopsy on Rowan's body, but that the local coroner refuses to do so. She says she doesn't have the \$3,500 it would cost for her to pay for an autopsy.

"It's important to my cause to prove that Rowan was alive in order to stop this from happening again," she said, noting an autopsy could provide such evidence.

In the meantime, Rowan's body is at a funeral home in cold storage.

Angele says she is going public with her story and considering legal action "so this doesn't happen to anybody else."

Remembering her experience after Rowan's birth, Angele said: "The first two times I told Violene to call 911, I thought she would. It hadn't crossed my mind that she wouldn't. ... It finally dawned on me: They're not going to help me save my son." That's when Angele called her friend and asked her to call 911.

Speaking of her Christian faith, Angele said, "I know you're thinking, 'How can a Christian possible make that decision?' – but I think it happens a lot more often than you think."

James S. Pendergraft, M.D., is the founder of the Orlando Women's Center and is known in pro-life communities as the "Tiller of Florida" because he performs late-term abortions. George Tiller, a well-

known late-term abortion doctor in Wichita, Kan., is referred by some activists as "Tiller the Killer."

Pendergraft was convicted of extortion in February 2001 and he served seven months behind bars. The conviction later was overturned, but last year, as part of the same legal battle, Pendergraft conceded in federal court that he impeded justice by supporting a business associate he knew was lying.

Bogus claim?

Mathew Staver is president and general counsel of Liberty Counsel.

"We're representing the mother and are working with the state of Florida," Staver told WND. "We're looking at various legal avenues."

Staver mentioned that in Florida, the Legislature is considering bills to regulate abortion clinics in the state – "and we're going to be providing some of this information to some legislators."

Liberty Counsel's ultimate goal, he said is to "shut this clinic down."

Staver says he took several photos of Rowan's body in the funeral home, commenting that he "looked like a perfectly healthy little boy."

Added Staver: "It's an amazing thing that this is what happens."

A receptionist at the EPOC Clinic referred WND to Marti McKenzie, who says she handles public relations for the facility. McKenzie discounted the complaint without hearing any of the details or the nature of the incident.

After being told Liberty Counsel was representing Angele, McKenzie advised WND: "I wouldn't pay too much attention to that if I were you. [Liberty Counsel is] always ready to jump all over anybody if they can come up with a reason if they're in the abortion business. I mean, that's really bogus."

McKenzie was not interested in receiving any information about the complaint and said she would contact WorldNetDaily if and when she had a response to any legal action taken against the clinic.

Federal enforcement

On Friday, the Bush administration said it would begin enforcing the 3-year-old Born-Alive Infant Protection Act, which requires doctors to attempt to keep alive a baby that survives an abortion.

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said in a statement: "Congress had received testimony that some infants who had been born alive after unsuccessful abortions were left to die. ... The Act reaffirms the legal principle that all infants born alive are entitled to the full protection of the law. That is a principle I will vigorously uphold as secretary. ... We took the first of these educational steps today by notifying relevant entities that we aggressively enforce federal laws that protect born-alive infants. We issued clear guidance that withholding medical care from an infant born alive may constitute a violation of the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act and the Medicare Conditions of Participation."

The 2002 act established that in all federal laws and regulations, the words "person," "human being," "child" and "individual" include "every infant member of the species homo sapiens who is born alive at any stage of development." The law also defines "born alive" as meaning "the complete expulsion or

extraction from his or her mother of that member, at any stage of development, who after such expulsion or extraction breathes or has a beating heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles, regardless of whether the umbilical cord has been cut, and regardless of whether the expulsion or extraction occurs as a result of natural or induced labor, cesarean section or induced abortion."

Erik Stanley, chief counsel at Liberty Counsel told WND: "We are looking at the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act as an option for enforcement" in the baby Rowan case.