

Mother Says Son Survived Abortion But Died After He Was Denied Care

A Florida woman claims her requests to call for paramedics went unheeded and her nearly 23-week-old son died in her hands. A Florida abortion clinic has come under fire over the recent death of a baby who reportedly survived an abortion but died minutes later when clinic workers allegedly ignored the mother's plea for emergency medical help.

Angele Taylor, 34, arrived at the Every Person's Own Choice (EPOC) abortion clinic in Orlando April 1 to begin a two-day procedure that would terminate her pregnancy of nearly 23 weeks.

Taylor said she returned to the clinic around 9 a.m. the next day, crying and complaining of bleeding and cramping. She said she was taken to a waiting room, given a wet blanket and was left alone to wait for the doctor.

But when Taylor went into an adjacent bathroom to sit and push to relieve the contractions, she gave birth. She looked in the toilet and saw her son looking up at her. His leg moved and his body curled up. She scooped the baby from the toilet and held him close to her.

Covered in blood, Taylor said she startled her son when she screamed for clinic workers to call 911, but the staff did nothing. "I stroked his precious little head and kept telling him I loved him and that it would be OK," she recalled.

A single mother of two, Taylor said she rubbed her son's back and stomach, but her efforts to sustain his life failed. Baby Rowan died some time after 10 a.m.

News of the birth sparked outrage among pro-life groups and a swift response from Mathew Staver, president of Liberty Counsel, an Orlando-based nonprofit firm that represents pro-life causes. Staver filed administrative complaints with the Florida Department of Health and Human Services and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administrations.

The complaints are levied at Dr. Harry Perper, who allegedly failed to be present during the abortion, and Dr. James Pendergraft, who owns the EPOC clinic. Staver complained that the clinic was unsanitary, as Taylor claims there was dried blood on the waiting room wall.

Troy Newman, director of Operation Rescue, is asking state and local officials to use all legal avenues, including the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, on Rowan's behalf. The bill gives infants born alive full legal rights under federal law regardless of the stage of development or whether the live birth occurred during an abortion.

But Pendergraft, who owns four other abortion facilities in Florida, said his staff did nothing wrong. "The autopsy concluded that the fetus was stillborn," Pendergraft, 48, told Charisma.

Pendergraft, who specializes in late-term abortions, said live births are not possible at his clinics because patients such as Taylor receive digoxin, a deadly drug that kills the baby once injected into his heart through the mother's womb.

Taylor's attorney, Brian Chavez-Ochoa, disagrees. "Baby Rowan did not receive digoxin, which would have stopped his heart and killed him," he said. "My client says she received a shot of Valium."

She also received a cervical dilator that prompted her to go into labor.

In an effort to save her son's life, Taylor used her cell phone to ask a friend to call 911 for help, but when Orlando Fire Department paramedics arrived at the clinic, they were first denied entrance into the facility, Chavez-Ochoa said.

"My friend is having an abortion, and the baby was born alive," Taylor's friend told the operator, the 911 transcript said. "They're not allowing her to use the phone there. They're wanting the baby to die."

Taylor said when she knew for certain her son was dead, she picked him up, held him to her chest, rocked him and prayed. Hours later, a wake was held at a local funeral home for baby Rowan.

According to the Mayo Clinic, babies born as early as 23 weeks have a good chance of survival if they receive care.

Since Rowan's death, Taylor has shared her story to help other women avoid the pain and regret she has experienced. "It is very shameful to step forward and admit publicly that I have been so wrong as to 'choose' to take the life of my child," Taylor wrote in a letter posted on Operation Rescue's Web site. "On the other hand, if it will [help others], then it is my duty, isn't it?"

Chavez-Ochoa said his client is considering all of her options in hopes of receiving justice for her son. “We are seeking intervention from state officials and the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington,” said Chavez-Ochoa, who is also contemplating a federal lawsuit against EPOC.

In the meantime, Sandy Epperson, a 15-year director of the Center for Pregnancy in Orlando, a Christ-centered facility that encourages women to keep their unborn babies or consider adoption, hopes Rowan’s death will energize believers. “Christians must wake up to the atrocities that occur in all abortion clinics,” she said. “These babies need us.”

Valerie G. Lowe