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Enforcement and Removal

10/02/2019

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ICE detainee passes away at Chula Vista hospital

SAN DIEGO – A 37-year-old Cameroon man in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) passed away Tuesday afternoon at Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center where he was undergoing treatment for a brain hemorrhage since Sept. 26.

Nebane Abienwi, a detainee at the Otay Mesa Detention Center (OMDC) in San Diego, was rushed to Sharp's Chula Vista Medical Center Thursday after experiencing a hypertensive event in the middle of the night. ICE Health Service Corps staff at OMDC contacted emergency medical services, which began immediate treatment upon arrival.

Physicians at the medical center provided treatment after Mr. Abienwi remained nonresponsive to questions and appeared to be paralyzed on his left side. He remained hospitalized at the Chula Vista hospital until his passing yesterday.

Medical staff at the Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center pronounced Mr. Abienwi dead Oct. 1. The medical staff identified the cause of death as brain death secondary to basal ganglia hemorrhage.

According to DHS records, Mr. Abienwi applied for admission into the United States without proper entry documents Sept. 5 at the San Ysidro Port of Entry. He was transferred to ICE custody Sept. 19.

Mr. Abienwi's next of kin and the Consulate General of Cameroon were notified of his death.

ICE is firmly committed to the health and welfare of all those in its custody and is undertaking a comprehensive agency-wide review of this incident, as it does in all such cases. Fatalities in ICE custody, statistically, are exceedingly rare and occur at a small fraction of the rate of the U.S. detained population as a whole.

This agency's comprehensive review will be conducted by ICE senior leadership to include Enforcement and Removal Operations, the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor.

Comprehensive medical care is provided to all individuals in ICE custody. Staffing for detainees includes registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, licensed mental health providers, mid-level providers like physician assistants and nurse practitioners, and a physician. Detainees also have access to dental care and 24-hour emergency care. Pursuant to its commitment to the welfare of those in the agency's custody, ICE spends more than \$260 million annually on the spectrum of healthcare services provided to detainees.

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AILA Doc. No. 16050900. (Posted 10/3/19)

10/3/2019

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Last Reviewed/Updated: 10/03/2019