



## DISTRICT NINE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

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## PRESS STATEMENT

***September 30, 2011***

Re: **Ann Marie Hefferin**, deceased  
(ME 2011-001028)

**Cause of Death:** Sepsis syndrome, due to  
*Streptococcus agalactiae* (group B streptococcus) bacteremia

**Manner of Death:** Natural

The death of Ann Marie Hefferin, an 18 year old college freshman, was due to sepsis syndrome caused by *Streptococcus agalactiae* (group B streptococcus) bacteremia. This bacterium was cultured postmortem from both her blood and the base of the brain. The available history, especially the events just prior to her death, is consistent with a rapidly progressive sepsis syndrome.

Historically felt to be primarily a problem in neonates, group B streptococcus is increasingly recognized as a virulent pathogen in non pregnant adults. Fulminant infectious deaths have been reported with this organism, usually in immunosuppressed hosts, but also in clinically immunocompetent adults, as in this case. In the article by Skoff, et al, group B streptococcus bacteremia without a focus accounted for 39% of invasive group B streptococcal disease in adults. (1)

Group B streptococci are normal flora of the gastrointestinal and genitourinary tract and are not contagious pathogens. If group B streptococcus makes its way into the blood stream (as in this case), or soft tissue, lungs, joints or spinal fluid, it is a highly virulent pathogen capable of causing fulminant infections and death.

Toxicology testing revealed only naproxen and caffeine within her blood with only a trace amount of alcohol detected in her vitreous fluid.

Jan C. Garavaglia, MD  
Chief Medical Examiner  
District Nine

- 1) Increasing Burden of Invasive Group B Streptococci Disease in Non Pregnant Adults, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. 2009; 49: 85-92