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DAD: SEIZURE MAY BE BEHIND FATAL FIGHT

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Article Text:

The Waterford man who died while being restrained by sheriff's deputies Wednesday morning suffered from epileptic seizures, his father said Thursday.

Family and friends of 43-year-old James Wells said he might have had a seizure when he forced his way into a home, attacked two women and then wrestled with deputies.

Deputy Royjindar Singh, a sheriff's spokesman, said it's too early to tell whether the man's physical condition was a factor in his death.

Coroner officials conducted an autopsy on Wells Thursday. Singh said officials will not determine the cause of death until they have the results of a toxicology screening, which could take as many as three weeks.

Wells' father, Jim Wells, said his son suffered from epilepsy and might have had multiple seizures during the incident Wednesday. He said his son once had 21 seizures in an hour.

"After it happens, he doesn't remember anything," Jim Wells said.

In March, James Wells moved into a Waterford apartment complex in the 300 block of Western Avenue, a few homes north of the house where the two women were attacked.

The senior Wells said he believes his son had a seizure in his sleep and woke up Wednesday morning in a state of "total confusion and wandered out looking for help."

Jim Wells, 68, who said he is retired from law enforcement, said the deputies should not have used a Taser on someone with a medical condition such as epilepsy.

"You don't do that unless you believe he's going to kill somebody," Wells said. "This should only be used as a last resort. This was absolutely over the top."

Singh said that when the deputies arrived, they had no way of knowing whether the man had any medical condition.

Sheriff's officials said James Wells attacked Nora Winn, 54, and her roommate, Viki George, 61, after he rammed open their front door, bending the deadbolt. Wells released Winn from a chokehold and walked to the front yard where the deputies confronted him.

Wells fought with Deputy Frank Alves and trainee deputy Joshua Houtchens when they tried to take him into custody. One of them used a Taser on Wells, but it had little effect. Wells fell, got up, and kept resisting, sheriff's officials said.

Wells wrestled with the deputies and bystanders for six minutes before they handcuffed him. Wells stopped breathing soon after, and the deputies performed CPR before medics arrived, officials said.

Singh said Alves and Houtchens were scheduled to be back at work Sunday and were not placed on administrative leave.

Nathan McCall, 25, and his brother, Shane McCall, 21, befriended Wells when he moved into their apartment complex six months ago. The brothers said they saw him Tuesday night and Wells was fine.

"He's had episodes before, but he's never been violent," Nathan McCall said. "He was never a violent person."

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