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# Teenager from faith-healing family dies in Oregon

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GLADSTONE, Ore. (AP) — Authorities say a teenager from a faith-healing family died from an illness that could have been easily treated, just a few months after a toddler cousin of his died in a case that has led to criminal charges.

Tuesday's death of 16-year-old Neil Beagley, however, may not be a crime because Oregon law allows minors 14 and older to decide for themselves whether to accept medical treatment.

"All of the interviews from last night are that he did in fact refuse treatment," police Sgt. Lynne Benton said Wednesday. "Unless we can disprove that, charges probably won't be filed in this case."

An autopsy Wednesday showed Beagley died of heart failure caused by a urinary tract blockage.

He likely had a congenital condition that constricted his urinary tract where the bladder empties into the urethra, and the condition of his organs indicates he had multiple blockages during his life, said Dr. Clifford Nelson, deputy state medical examiner for Clackamas County.

"You just build up so much urea in your bloodstream that it begins to poison your organs, and the heart is particularly susceptible," Nelson said.

Nelson said a catheter would have saved the boy's life. If the condition had been dealt with earlier, a urologist could easily have removed the blockage and avoided the kidney damage that came with the repeated illnesses, Nelson said.

Benton said a board member of the Followers of Christ church contacted the authorities after Beagley died at his family's home. The teen had been sick about a week, and church members and his family had gathered to pray Sunday when his condition worsened, Benton said.

In March, the boy's 15-month-old cousin Ava Worthington died at home from bronchial pneumonia and a blood infection.

Her parents, Carl and Raylene Worthington, also belong to the church. They have pleaded not guilty to manslaughter and criminal mistreatment, and their defense attorneys have indicated they will use a religious freedom defense.

After earlier deaths involving children of Followers of Christ believers, a 1999 Oregon law struck down religious shields for parents who treat their children solely with prayer. No one had been prosecuted under it until the Worthingtons' case.

Members and former members of the church in Oregon City have told The Oregonian newspaper in previous interviews that the congregation has 1,200 people. It has no apparent ties to other congregations or any mainstream denomination.