

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/oklahoma-plans-to-continue-executions-despite-flaws-in-lethal-injection-protocol/>

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11.03.21

Oklahoma officials said the state does not plan to make any changes to its lethal injection protocols even after witnesses reported that the first drug injected into John Grant during his execution last Thursday caused him to convulse and vomit.

Media witnesses [reported](#) on Thursday night that Mr. Grant vomited and appeared to convulse about two dozen times after he was injected with what [doctors](#) have described as an insane dose of the sedative midazolam. He was declared unconscious about 15 minutes later, AP News [reported](#).

Vomiting during a lethal injection is extremely rare, observers [told](#) AP, raising troubling questions about whether Oklahoma botched yet another execution.

Also troubling was the states [failure to even mention](#) the convulsing and vomiting in its first official summary, which said the execution was carried out without complication.

In response to the witness accounts, the states prisons director later said regurgitation is common during sedation, AP [reported](#). But doctors dispute that claim.

When it is properly administered, midazolam does not usually cause vomiting by itself, Dr. Karen Sibert, an anesthesiologist and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, [told](#) AP.

She said that a lack of oxygen, compounded by high levels of anxiety and distress, could have caused Mr. Grants convulsions.

[Doctors are also questioning](#) the extremely high dosage of midazolam the states protocol requires as Mr. Grants execution adds to mounting evidence that the use of midazolam creates an intolerable risk of a cruel and inhumane execution.

Mr. Grant was the first person executed in Oklahoma after the botched executions of [Clayton Lockett](#) and [Charles Warner](#) in 2014 and 2015. Mr. Lockett died of a heart attack after writhing and groaning on the gurney. Mr. Warners last words before he was injected with a paralytic that prevented him from speaking or moving were, My body is on fire. An autopsy report revealed the state had injected him with the wrong drug.

After a grand jury determined the state had committed grave errors in the way it administered lethal injections, state officials put all [executions on hold](#) in 2015.

Oklahoma has six more lethal injection executions scheduled between now and March 2022.

The next person scheduled to be executed is Julius Jones, on November 18.

But the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board voted 3-1 on Monday to recommend that the governor [grant clemency](#) to Mr. Jones, who has maintained that he is innocent.

The board [voted earlier](#) this year to recommend that Gov. Kevin Stitt commute Mr. Jones sentence to life with the possibility of parole.

The governor did not act on that recommendation, saying it should be addressed in a clemency hearing, which was held on Monday and lasted more than three hours.

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The state said an execution happened without complication. Reporters in the room had a different story.

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