

Adopted Boy Didn't Die From Self-Inflicted Injuries, Expert Says

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YORK, Pennsylvania — A forensic pathologist testifying in the trial of an American couple charged with killing their adopted Russian son said the 7-year-old did not cause the injuries that killed him as his parents have claimed.

Testifying for the prosecution, Dr. Wayne Ross also told the jury that "severe, significant failure-to-thrive or starvation" contributed to the death of Nathaniel Craver, or Ivan Skorobogatov, in August 2009, The York Dispatch reported last week.

The trial of Nathaniel's parents, Michael and Nanette Craver, started last week. They adopted him and his twin sister from a Chelyabinsk orphanage in 2003.

Ross said the boy's legs were as thin as pencils, bruises covered his torso and back, and his brain showed widespread evidence of blunt-force trauma. He said torn muscles around Nathaniel's shoulders and pelvis — some of them fresh — indicated that someone yanked or pulled on him.

The Cravers' lawyers have argued that the child's injuries were self-inflicted, triggered by fetal alcohol syndrome and reactive detachment disorder, but Ross said he ruled that out during the autopsy.

His "conglomeration of injuries [were] due to the direct action of another, and not due to self-abuse," Ross testified.

The York Daily Record reported that on cross-examination, Ross said he saw no neurological evidence of fetal alcohol syndrome.

The Cravers sought medical help for Nathaniel repeatedly in the years before his death, their lawyers have said.

Five of Nathaniel's preschool teachers testified Friday that the boy always seemed happy to see his mother when she picked him up and she appeared concerned for his welfare.

Michael Craver, 46, and Nanette Craver, 55, have been held without bail since they were arrested in February last year after an autopsy revealed that Nathaniel had about 80 external injuries, including 20 to his head. They face charges including criminal homicide and endangerment.

The boy's twin sister went to live with a family member after her parents' arrest.

The death has been monitored by officials in Russia, which in July signed a treaty for more authority to monitor adopted children after they arrive in the United States.

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