

No leads found in patient rape

By RON DesJARLAIS

State officials and Staten Island police have not yet discovered who raped and impregnated a severely retarded quadraplegic woman at the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC), authorities said yesterday.

The 31-year-old, 78-pound woman, who cannot speak, was found to be pregnant 10 days ago by SIDC officials, who then notified police.

According to Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, doctors are now reassessing the term of the woman's pregnancy. They had originally believed her to be eight months pregnant, but now think she may be only six months along, Mrs. Connelly said.

She said it is almost certain the the baby will be brought to term.

Lt. William Quinn of the Staten Island Crimes Against Persons Squad said police are still looking for the man who attacked the woman but haven't focused on any suspects.

"If I had my way, I would shoot him," Mrs. Connelly said of the rapist. "This is the worst kind of perversion that anybody here has ever heard of."

Quinn said detectives are interviewing residents and workers at the center and are still hopeful they will solve the case.

"The investigation is continuing," he said. "We don't feel the case is dead. We are working on things. We're speaking to a lot of people in SIDC. A lot of stuff is really confidential at this time."

Mrs. Connelly quoted doctors as saying the woman, whose name was withheld, is not in any danger.

She said they believe she will give birth sometime in February, probably by Caesarean section. The baby would then be turned over to the state Social Services Department to be put up for adoption, she said.

Mrs. Connelly said she believes the center was not to blame in the delay in detecting the pregnancy.

"Pregnancy was about the last thing anybody would have imagined," Mrs. Connelly said. "I think pregnancy would be the most remote thing that they would consider."

She said doctors at first treated the woman for a gastric problem. They then thought she had tumors on her abdomen.

The chairman of the state Commission on Quality Care, however, called the delay in detecting the pregnancy "disturbing."

Clarence Sundram, who heads the agency, said yesterday that it seems there was "ample time" to diagnose the pregnancy.

Sundram, however, said the commission will not take a position on the incident until the police and internal investigations are completed.

He said the commission is "monitoring" those investigations, and depending upon their results, may conduct an investigation of its own.

The matter is being investigated "as closely as anything ever has been" by the center's Incident Review officials, according to Ray Gannon of the center's Consumer Advisory Board.

The results of the investigation will be then sent to the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Asks investigation of patient rape

The report of a quadriplegic resident of Staten Island Developmental Center pregnant for eight months as a result of rape raises numerous questions that cry for answers:

Who committed this heinous act? Could a fellow patient have covered up his crime?

How long had sexual abuse of the woman gone on?

- How could a pregnancy go undetected for so long? Aren't patients bathed? Menstrual cycles at least noted? Physical condition monitored?

How many other patients suffer such abuse?

I call upon our state representatives to fully investigate conditions at Willowbrook.

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(The writer is chairman of the interim committee of the Richmond County Right to Life Party.)