

Amanda Wienckowski Autopsy: Murder

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by Geoff Kelly

On Tuesday afternoon, lawyers for the family of **Amanda Wienckowski** released the long-awaited report from Dr. **Silvia Comparini**, the pathologist they hired to determine the cause of the 20-year-old woman's death. Her verdict: She was beaten, raped, and strangled to death.



On January 9, 2009, Wienckowski's body was found—bruised and scarred, folded in two and frozen stiff, stripped of clothes, her long blond hair shorn—outside the New Covenant Church on the corner of Clinton and Spring Streets. Despite the signs of violence

and traces of a date rape drug in her system, Erie County's medical examiners ruled her death an accidental overdose, obviating any further investigation into what her family believed to be a murder. In the months and years that followed, the family fought for the release of autopsy records, and even Wienckowski's withheld body parts, so that they could commission their own investigation. They were stonewalled but persevered with the help of former Buffalo cold case detective **Dennis Delano** (now a Cheektowaga town justice), attorney **Steve Cohen** of Hogan Willig, WBEN radio host **Kathy Weppner**, and many others.

Comparini concludes that Wienckowski was strangled and struggled against her attacker. She dismisses the notion that her death was caused by drugs in her system.

Both Erie County Attorney **Jeremy Colby** and Erie County District Attorney **Frank A. Sedita III** were provided copies of Comparini's report Tuesday morning, per the agreement under which the medical examiners' reports and materials were released to Comparini. There were a number of strictures under which Comparini worked, imposed by Judge Gerald Whalen, in whose court Wienckowski's family pled their case. For example, Comparini's secretarial staff was not permitted to view or handle any materials provided; Comparini had to label and sort all the evidence herself, adding significantly to the time it took her to complete the autopsy. In a prefatory note to Cohen, Comparini writes, "This

became particularly challenging since the evidence I was receiving from the Erie County Medical Examiner’s office was different—sometimes subtly so—from what I requested and you demanded and the Court ordered produced.”

To view some evidence, Comparini, who is based in Los Angeles, had to travel to Buffalo. In her note to Cohen, she suggests a possible rationale for some of the conditions imposed by Whalen:

As I went through the evidence, it occurs to me likely that the Court realized that, notwithstanding the ruling of the Erie County Medical Examiner to the contrary, Amanda Wienckowski’s death was, in fact, a homicide. I believe that the Court may have been acting in an abundance of caution. The Judge, having been made aware by the legal documents of anomalies and irregularities, may have been anticipating chain of custody red herrings which could impede any homicide prosecution, and restricted access to evidence accordingly. Given the (in my experience unprecedented) lack of cooperation by the Erie County ME’s office in the further inquiry of this cause of death, the Judge may have been quite wise in what he did.

Suspicion has settled on at least two people: On the night Wienckowski disappeared, 42-year-old **Adam Patterson**, with whom she sometimes stayed, allegedly delivered her to the Spring Street house of 25-year-old **Antoine Garner**, where she supposedly planned to trade sex for drugs. Patterson says he left her there and never saw her again. Garner at first denied that she visited him that night, then later allowed that she had come to his house but then left. Garner is currently facing charges in an assault case—an attempted rape in which he is alleged to have tried to strangle his victim.

You can read the summary and the full autopsy report on **AV Daily** at Artvoice.com.