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## Trouble Finding Inmate's Vein Slows Lethal Injection in Ohio

By ADAM LIPTAK

It took almost 90 minutes to execute Joseph L. Clark in an Ohio prison yesterday, in what critics of the death penalty said was the latest in a series of botched executions nationwide.

Courts around the country are considering a variety of challenges to lethal injections, which lawyers for death row inmates contend can be needlessly painful and therefore cruel and unusual punishment.

In Mr. Clark's case, prison technicians had trouble finding a suitable vein through which to administer the lethal chemicals, said a prison spokeswoman, Andrea Dean. Ms. Dean speculated that Mr. Clark's veins might have been damaged by drug abuse.

"It took them about 22 minutes, and they found one good site," she said.

The deadly chemicals started to flow at 10:25 a.m., Ms. Dean said.

"But after about three or four minutes," she continued, "the inmate was able to raise his head off the gurney and said, 'It's not working.' " The vein had collapsed, she said.

The curtains separating witnesses from the execution chamber were then closed for more than a half-hour while technicians tried to find a second suitable vein. After one was located, the execution continued, and Mr. Clark was pronounced dead at 11:26 a.m.

Ohio has executed 21 prisoners since 1999, all by lethal injection. "We have never had an incident like this," Ms. Dean said. "We are going to review our policies and our protocol."

Mr. Clark, 57, was convicted of the 1984 killing of David Manning, a gas station clerk. He was also serving a life sentence for killing a second man. He was executed at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville.

Opponents of the death penalty said it was time to re-examine lethal injections, which are used in 37 states.

"The constitutional requirement is that the best available technology be used to extinguish life as painlessly as

possible," said Eric M. Freedman, a law professor at Hofstra University. "Today's botched execution makes perfectly clear that the first generation of drug protocols needs to be succeeded by a second generation, just as the electric chair became technologically obsolete and therefore vanished."

Deborah W. Denno, a Fordham University law professor who is an authority on methods of execution, expressed surprise at yesterday's events. "With all the visibility of this topic and all the scrutiny," she said, "the authorities still are not able to do these executions properly."

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