



WORLD & NATION

Court Takes Girl From Parents, Orders Chemotherapy : Austria: Six-year-old has nine-pound tumor. Her mother and father rejected treatment on advice of ex-doctor who says cancer is a state of mind.

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<I> FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS</I>

VIENNA — In a case that has gripped Europe, an Austrian court has ordered that a 6-year-old girl with a cancerous tumor be given chemotherapy treatment despite her parents' objections.

The decision was made after medical experts determined it was a matter of life and death, the girl's court-appointed guardian said.

Olivia Pilhar was transferred early Saturday from a hospital in Tulln, 25 miles northwest of Vienna, to the intensive care ward at Vienna's general hospital. Austrian radio reported she would begin chemotherapy this weekend.

The small tumor that doctors discovered on her kidney May 18 has grown to fill her abdomen. It weighs about nine pounds and has largely displaced her internal organs, said Dr. Klaus Lechner, a hematologist at the Vienna hospital.

Her parents rejected medical treatment on the advice of a former doctor who claims cancer is a state of mind. He has been barred from practicing medicine in his native Germany for his unorthodox views.

Millions of Europeans have watched the drama unfold. Interest in the case is enhanced by a strong European interest in non-traditional medical treatments.

Dr. Hanns Vanura, head of pediatrics at the Tulln hospital, has been campaigning for Olivia to have the chemotherapy. He said she had a nearly 100% chance of recovery when the tumor was still small, but he refused to say what her chances would be now.

Erika and Helmut Pilhar brought their daughter home last week after hiding out for weeks in Switzerland and Spain. They said they decided to allow chemotherapy but changed their minds Friday after talking to the former doctor, Geerd Ryke Hamer.

Vanura said the judges were called on to decide what to do next. In consultation with local officials and medical experts, the court in lower Austria stripped the Pilhars late Friday of custody of their daughter, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Vanura told Austrian radio that the court “decided there must be treatment, even against the will of the parents.”

Austrian law permits judges to authorize medical treatment against the wishes of the parents, but doctors had been reluctant to go to court because the girl is extremely close to her mother.

“It certainly was not easy,” Heinz Zimper, Olivia’s court-appointed guardian, said of the negotiations. “We only had the choice between life and certain death.”

Olivia’s mother, who had refused to leave her daughter’s bedside in Tulln, did not accompany her to Vienna on Saturday, Vanura said.

“The mother didn’t go with her, because she would have seen that as a consent to the treatment,” he said.

Newspapers reported Saturday that Austrian authorities issued an arrest warrant for Hamer, the ex-doctor, on suspicion of torturing or neglecting a minor.

Hamer reportedly is in Cologne, Germany.

Supporters of Olivia's parents announced Saturday that they would begin a hunger strike.

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