

Kidney in Oregon

(ABC News Service)

Horacio Reyes-Camarena was convicted of committing a heinous crime. He stabbed an 18 year old woman to death. And that was not the end of the trouble he caused the state of Oregon. Two days before his sentencing, he and another prisoner escaped from jail. In the process, Reyes-Camarena fell four stories and eluded capture for three more weeks. During the fall, he suffered serious injuries and now has such severe kidney damage that he must be hooked up to a dialysis machine three days a week, four hours at a time. His treatment while on death row, awaiting his ongoing appeals, is costing the taxpayers of Oregon some \$120,000 per year. Last month, Reyes-Camarena's prison doctor pointed out that he is a good candidate for a kidney transplant, medically speaking. But ethically speaking? As it is with health care these days, money is often the bottom line. Reyes-Camarena's dialysis costs \$120,000 per year, every year. A transplant operation would be a one time cost of approximately \$100,000. He would still require anti-rejection drugs, which are not cheap, but there is no question that the surgery would be less expensive to the state of Oregon than ongoing dialysis. Some 55,000 people are waiting for kidney transplants around the country. And in Oregon, the state budget crisis is so dire that thousands of people are denied some level of health care each day because the state health system is virtually broke. So, the people of Oregon were outraged when it was even discussed as a possibility that Reyes-Camarena might get one of the precious few kidneys available for transplant. Would the state be keeping him healthy just long enough to kill him?