

Ordeal

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treated," said Kathie O'Donohue, Farmington Hills mother of five who founded a support group for sufferers of postpartum depression. "Women need to recognize that depression will not necessarily just go away. They need information and support."

O'Donohue said she had difficulty sleeping, concentrating and

completing tasks while feeling depressed after the birth of her fourth child.

"I'm relieved with this verdict (that Koga return to Japan after seven months of therapy)," O'Donohue said. "I hope that what may come out of this is the publicity about this problem so that he (baby Koga) will not be a silent victim."

The case of Mrs. Koga, who drowned her infant, set off a discussion of postpartum depression and the American legal system's ability to deal with it.

In England, for instance, a 1939 law would have not allowed Koga to be prosecuted for murder, as she had first been in this country.

But her attorney, Neil Fink, did not minimize her actions or their impact.

"This isn't something that would be OK in Japan," he said. "I don't even think now that she realizes what has happened."

Izumi Koga's husband Akihiro, who pulled his son's lifeless body from the murky pond behind the couple's apartment building, held his wife's hand and stood by her throughout her ordeal. And his employer, Nissan,



Neil Fink

provided the family with legal, financial and emotional support throughout.

Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer said he and the officers working on the case had agreed with the sentence.

The prosecutor's office asked us about the (sentence) recommendation and we felt it was appropriate under these very difficult circumstances."

Detective Sandra Rochford, an

18-year veteran who has worked on many sensitive cases involving abused children, said this one was still an emotional roller coaster.

"You have sympathy for the victim but compassion for the perpetrator," said Rochford, who is a parent as well. "This was not a routine case. Having a baby and being at home alone can be a difficult time of alienation even if you are an American."

That feeling was shared by many Japanese people who live in Farmington Hills, New York City and Japan.

"I'm glad for her," said Mike Yamada, a Farmington Hills resident and Southfield businessman. "She doesn't need to spend time in jail. I think people at Nissan (where her husband Akihiro works) are pleased with this sentence."

Yamada said there had been concern about the case going to trial, especially in light of recent events.

In the O.J. Simpson case, it seemed like the jury system did not work," he said, adding that in Japan, justice do not decide cases. "To be honest, I feel better knowing it didn't go to trial."

O'Donohue said this was not like the case where a South Carolina woman deliberately drowned her two sons.

"This is not going to be a case where someone is going to fool all these (psychiatrists) experts into thinking they are mentally ill," she said.

Sumiko Miyamoto of Aesha TV, a company based in New York City that distributes U.S. news of interest back to Japan, said the case had received more publicity among Japanese people in New York than in Tokyo.

"There are a lot of expatriate Japanese in Westchester and Scarsdale who have paid attention to this case," she said, adding that a local Japanese-language weekly has followed the case without using Koga's name.

Fink talked about an emotional moment for his client and her family when she prayed and wept before a shrine to her dead son that included his pictures and toys.

"She will no doubt suffer for the rest of her life," he said.

Koga

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with her engineer husband, Mrs. Koga, who spoke no English, gave birth to the couple's first child, but suffered from depression, which has since been diagnosed as postpartum depression.

Even with the help of her older sister Midori Taganaki, who was visiting from Japan, Tsumi Koga could apparently not cope with her colicky baby. She and her family enjoyed a seemingly normal evening before the grim event.

Mrs. Koga had first been arrested and detained in the Oakland County Jail, then transferred to Beaumont Hospital's psychiatric unit in Royal Oak, and then transferred to the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. She was put on an electronic tether at her Citation Club apartment in March while continuing treatment.

Two of the three psychiatrists who examined Mrs. Koga determined that she was mentally ill

throughout the period of the drowning and beyond. The third determined that she was mentally ill at the time.

"If baby Koga has a legacy, it is the publicity attached to this case," Koga's attorney Neil Fink said. "More people know about this dreaded disease (postpartum depression)."

Fink said he hoped the publicity would lead women in a similar situation to seek help and for families and doctors to intervene.

Assistant Prosecutor Paul Walton feared another legacy.

"All the elements of first-degree murder were proven," he said, adding that he worried that the case might set a bad precedent. "Only time will tell."

Judge Cooper said the so-called "insanity defense" is a difficult standard, but one Koga met. And yet, the judge herself did not seem satisfied on all counts.

"There is no one to speak for this baby — this born alive, healthy, precious baby that no longer exists," she said. "Usually the family of the victim would speak at the sentencing. But that is not the case here."

Koga's attorneys proposed that a psychosis from the depression had caused her to act irrationally.

As her husband comforted her, the couple was led from the courtroom where they both shed tears of relief.

"This is what we'd hoped for and what we'd worked for," Fink said of the sentence.

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ACHING ALL OVER
If you develop aching in your body, possibly over several weeks or months, you have reason for concern. However, before you make an appointment to see a doctor, you should consider the following:
First, are you taking on too much? You may not consider it a form of employment, but caring for a child ages 1-5 is work. The amount of bending and stooping is formidable. In addition, picking up a small child, is not light duty. Children weigh from 10 lbs. to 35 lbs. or more. Lifting them puts your weight working against you. If you also consider that you have not previously exercised in an orderly manner, then you can expect your muscles will ache in response to such effort.
If you combine child care with a regular, even part time employment, it is likely you are putting your body through substantial strain.
Second, what is your weight? You may have been heavy all your life and borne it well, but the extra bending and stooping required for child care, plus continuing your regular work, presents a strain where none existed before.
Third, what is your age? If you are over age 55, you can't expect to call upon the resiliency and reserve of the past.
What you may need is not an examination by a physician, but a second look at what you are putting yourself through at present.

Physical Therapy & Sports Medicine
by Richard W. Miller, P.T., A.C.S.M., M.S.

ARE YOU SITTING DOWN?
If you are a sedentary type who takes "sitting" in the fact that at least you do not smoke, new research has surfaced to undermine your rationale. It seems that a study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that the sedentary lifestyle is the leading cause of death in this country. The study tracked 32,421 adults in this country between 1970 and 1980, an inactive lifestyle is comparable to such health-threatening factors as smoking, high blood pressure, and elevated cholesterol levels. As it turns out, individuals who possessed even a moderate level of fitness had at least a 17 percent lower death rate than those in the low-fitness group. Perhaps the most eye-opening fact to emerge from the study is that physically fit smokers seemed to have a lower death rate than sedentary nonsmokers.

The hardest part of exercise is getting started, but once you begin to feel the positive effects of exercise — feeling and looking good — you will want to stay with it. It's important to keep in mind that obtaining the health benefits of exercise does not require tremendous effort. If you need some help starting an exercise program, contact MILLER PHYSICAL THERAPY & SPORTS MEDICINE, P.C. We maintain a "can-do" attitude to help our patients realize their full potential for functional outcomes. To schedule a consultation, call us at (810) 478-7330. Located at 33566 Eight Mile Road, Suite A, Farmington Hills, we are open weekdays by appointment.
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