



Investigation into Bessemer dialysis deaths ends with no links found

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BESSEMER, Alabama - Two deaths and five hospitalizations last month of patients at a dialysis center here have no common thread tying them together, and the Bessemer Kidney Center will be allowed to re-open, a state health official said today.

"From the investigation, we didn't find anything to correlate with the blood cultures," said Dr. Tom Geary, director of the Bureau of Health Provider Standards at the Alabama Department of Public Health, "This is not to say that there couldn't possibly have been one. But we could not find one. Not in the water system. Not in any one particular dialysis machine. Not in any particular dialysis technician."

The center's owner, [Fresenius Medical Care North America](#), with dozens of centers in Alabama, shut down the Bessemer facility on May 8 after two patients died and five others were hospitalized in a period of several days.

"It was a random association of events within a short time frame, and recognized by the (center's) administration, reported to the health department and investigated," Geary said.

Geary said 10 percent of dialysis patients die every year, mostly from blood infections or vascular issues.

However, the investigation did find deficiencies in the center's operation.

A report on those deficiencies has not yet been made public. But Geary said they include concerns over staffing levels and training. The deficiencies must be addressed with a plan of action before the center can re-open, he said.

According to state records, [the Bessemer center was cited last year](#) for not meeting standards for infection control, glove use and disinfection of surfaces, among other things. The deficiencies were subsequently corrected, according to the state.

A spokesman for Fresenius confirmed Monday that Bessemer Kidney Center remained shuttered for now.

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