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Witness: Tests indicate murder suspect has AIDS dementia

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A second medical expert says there is objective evidence that Kenneth Wilk has AIDS-related dementia and likely had the condition when he fatally shot Broward Sheriff's Deputy Todd Fatta more than 21/2 years ago.

Medical testing of Wilk's brain shows damage consistent with dementia, said Dr. Jeff Gelblum, a Miami Beach and Aventura neurologist, in two days of testimony that ended Monday in federal court in Fort Lauderdale.

Wilk faces several charges including the capital murder of Fatta and attempted murder of Lt. Angelo Cedeño while they were serving a child-porn warrant at his Fort Lauderdale home on Aug. 19, 2004.

Wilk's defense attorneys hope to convince jurors that Wilk was temporarily insane because of the dementia when he shot the deputies. The defense also contends Wilk had hearing problems and may not have heard the officers knock and announce they were sheriff's deputies before breaking in his front door.

MRI and PET scans of Wilk's brain, done earlier this year, both showed problems with Wilk's brain, Gelblum testified. The MRI, or magnetic resonance imaging, scan gives experts a snapshot of the brain's structure, he said, while a PET, or positron emission tomography, scan gives them a picture of the brain's functioning by tracking the flow of a radioactive substance through the brain.

The MRI showed some brain atrophy, or loss of tissue. That caused larger than normal cavities to develop between the brain lobes, he said.

"From stem to stern, that HIV virus is picking off area after area of his nervous system," Gelblum said.

Such spaces are abnormal in a 45-year-old man, Gelblum testified, and they could not have developed in the 21/2 years between the shooting and when the test was done.

U.S. District Judge James Cohn told the jury that the testing of Wilk's brain was delayed because of legal procedures that Cohn and an appeals court had to approve.

Another expert witness for the defense, Dr. Michael Maher, a Tampa physician and psychiatrist, testified earlier that Wilk had AIDS dementia on the day of the shooting.

The PET scan showed abnormally low brain function in the areas of the brain involved in mood,



memory and speech comprehension. There was also decreased activity in parts of the brain controlling association, visual orientation, and calculation, Gelblum said.

Prosecutors say Wilk is faking the dementia, noting that he urged his boyfriend Kelly Ray Jones to fake AIDS dementia for his defense on related child-porn charges.

It is impossible to fake an MRI or PET scan, Gelblum said.

Gelblum also testified that he had experience with patients who tried to fake dementia for insurance or disability purposes. "I've been in practice long enough to know when someone is legit," he said.

Staff Writer Vanessa Blum contributed to this report.

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