

Kianna's Legacy

We regret to report that Kianna Karnes, featured in last Thursday's editorial on the Food and Drug Administration's fetish for the placebo-controlled testing of cancer drugs—"How About a 'Kianna's Law'?"—died Friday night of complications from kidney cancer. She was 44.

While it came too late to save Mrs. Karnes, our reporting of her plight certainly generated a lot of attention. Bayer and Pfizer—developers of two investigational drugs showing much promise for this particularly deadly cancer—both contacted her doctor almost immediately to discuss the appropriateness of providing the compounds. Mrs. Karnes's family was also contacted by the FDA and told that the agency stood ready to approve such treatment on an emergency basis.

All encouraging steps. But isn't it a national scandal that cancer sufferers should have to be written about in *The Wall Street Journal* to be offered legal access to emerging therapies once they've run out of other options?

The FDA's oncology division has proven to

be essentially incorrigible on this point in recent years, so it's time for Congressional action mandating that the agency use 21st-century science and statistical methods to get these therapies to patients sooner. More specifically, drug approvals could be based on large trials open to all comers and analyzed with so-called Bayesian statistics, as already happens in the FDA's medical device division. (Yes, the agency at least recognizes that studies involving, say, "placebo" defibrillators would be beyond the pale.)

Mrs. Karnes's father John Rowe—himself a leukemia survivor—plans intense Congressional lobbying in the coming weeks, and he's had some interest from Congressman Dan Burton's (R., Indiana) office in the possibility of sponsoring a "Kianna's Law." No doubt there will be others willing to sign on.

We'll keep you posted. Meanwhile, we'd suggest that cancer patients looking for a constructive way to make their voices heard—and those looking to educate themselves on the issue—contact the Abigail Alliance for Better Access to Developmental Drugs at www.abigail-alliance.org.