# CRIMINAL LAW IN THE NEWS

European manufacturers of lethal injection drugs like sodium thiopental and pentobarbital in the past several years decided to stop selling these drugs to American states for use in executions. A shortage of these drugs led correctional authorities to experiment with new combinations of drug cocktails. The executions of Dennis McGuire in Ohio in January 2014, Clayton D. Lockett in Oklahoma in April 2014, and Joseph R. Wood III in Arizona in July 2014 led to a questioning of executions through lethal injection that included the sedative midazolam. Midazolam is used to induce a coma-like sleep. A second drug paralyzes the individual, and a third drug induces a heart attack. McGuire's execution in Ohio required roughly twenty-five minutes, although death normally should occur within ten minutes. Witnesses reported that McGuire appeared to be gasping for air and seemed to be conscious of the pain associated with the execution. Lockett's execution in Oklahoma took forty-three minutes. Lockett reportedly was moaning in pain because an improperly placed intravenous line prevented the drugs from flowing directly into his bloodstream. Wood also was executed using midazolam and according to observers gasped for air over six hundred times during the nearly two hours it took for him to die.

The three inmates all had been convicted of brutal crimes, and the families of the victims stressed that their loved ones had suffered to a much greater extent than their assailants. Lockett, for example, had been convicted of shooting a nineteen-year-old woman and burying her alive.

In reaction to the shortage of drugs used in lethal injection, Oklahoma and Utah have authorized the use of firing squads if the required chemicals are unavailable thirty days before an execution is

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