

Helpern Accuses Aide of Trying To Discredit Him by Deception

Dr. Milton Helpern, the city's Chief Medical Examiner, accused one of his deputies yesterday of giving misleading information about morgue cases in an attempt to discredit Dr. Helpern and obtain his job.

The Chief Medical Examiner, who will retire on Dec. 31 after 20 years in his post, asserted in a televised interview that the source of recent articles in The New York Times involving his office and other city agencies was Dr. Michael Baden, one of five deputy chief medical examiners here.

Dr. Baden denied that he was the source for the articles.

Dr. Helpern also charged that there was a campaign "to put me on the shelf and to insert young Sir Galahad into the position." Sir Galahad was intended as an ironic reference to Dr. Baden. Dr. Helpern said he would not recommend Dr. Baden as his successor.

The Chief Medical Examiner is appointed by the Mayor from among the three top qualifiers on a Civil Service examination.

In recent weeks The Times has published several articles involving the Medical Examiner's office and other public agencies, including a report that the Medical Examiner's office had severed the head of an unidentified woman who was believed to have drowned, buried her body in a potter's field without performing an autopsy and discovered only by chance later that the head contained a bullet.

A subsequent article reported the failure of city agencies to notify a family of the death of a member of the family,

George K. Gutterman, who had collapsed of a heart attack on a Queens street, and another disclosed the cremation of the body of a baby that according to the child's parents was mistakenly released to a funeral home by the Medical Examiner's office.

Dr. Baden, informed of Dr. Helpern's charges on WNBC-TV's "Sunday Program," said "I have not been the source of the recent stories in the press."

Kenneth Schlesinger, a lawyer representing some members of Mr. Gutterman's family in a suit against the city, said Dr. Helpern's accusations were "unfortunate" because family members were the sources for the articles on Mr. Gutterman.

Arthur Gelb, metropolitan editor of The Times, issued this statement: The reporter, M. A. Farber, gathered his information for the articles from numerous sources, both inside and outside city agencies.

"The stories, involving the Medical Examiner's office as well as other agencies, were meticulously researched over a period of weeks, and the facts speak for themselves. None of these stories were called to the attention of The Times by Dr. Baden."