

# Helpern: He's 'unqualified'

Dr. MICHAEL Baden was described as "unqualified" for the job six years ago by his former boss.

Dr. Milton Helpern, New York's fabled long-time ME who served as the model for television's Quincy, even

considered bringing Baden up on charges just before the end of his long tenure at the age of 75 in December 1973. Helpern died in 1977.

In a confidential memo, a copy of which has been obtained by The Post, he told the incoming administration of Mayor Abraham Beame:

"I consider him (Baden) professionally unqualified for the position of Chief Medical Examiner."

Helpern cited two reasons, both related to the work and views of Baden's wife, Dr. Judianne Densen-Gerber, founder of Odyssey House which espoused drug-free therapy of heroin addicts.

Helpern alleged "serious conflict of interest" and abuse of statistics by Baden in "hasty unwarranted conclusions attributing deaths to acute methadone poisoning."

He said the conclusions were made available to Odyssey House "which publicized them to disadvantage the many methadone maintenance programs" in the city.

The second allegation was "disloyalty . . . and divided loyalty."

Baden, the memo said, "on numerous occasions" defied Helpern's directives and appeared at Odyssey House conferences and

similar occasions where he was identified as Deputy Chief Medical Examiner which Helpern called "an act of insubordination."

The veteran ME was critical of Baden for showing "a special interest in every case in which methadone was a possible factor in a death."

He cited an instance in which the New York Times was alerted to a so-called methadone death in Bellevue's prison ward "before the autopsy of this case by Dr. Baden was finished and the findings (were given to the reporters without the knowledge of the Chief Medical Examiner."

### CONCLUSION

In this case, Helpern said, "My subsequent review did not justify the conclusion of acute methadone poisoning. A chemical finding alone is not sufficient basis for such a conclusion."

When Baden was asked to comment last night on this memo which had been addressed to Beame's first Deputy Mayor James Cavanaugh, he said he had no knowledge of it.

He called it "irresponsible to drag out all that old stuff now. I don't see how it is pertinent."

In Helpern's final days in office there were stories published alleging irregularities in the ME's office.

Helpern publicly accused Baden of planting the stories in an effort to discredit him.

Mayor Koch gave no indications yesterday of his plans for a successor to Baden.