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Bad care blamed in man's death at Novato hospital

Widow's lawsuit accuses staff of negligence

By Nancy Isles Nation
IJ reporter

The widow of a Novato man is suing Novato Community Hospital, claiming the facility is responsible for the wrongful death of her husband after a nurse failed to notice he was on the floor having a heart attack because the view was obscured by the bed.

In a civil lawsuit, filed in Marin Superior Court yesterday, Diane Thraikill alleges the hospital was negligent in the care and treatment of her husband, George Thraikill, 66.

Following his death, George Thraikill's family learned from hospital staff of the events prior to the fatal heart attack.

After requesting her husband's

medical records, Diane Thraikill learned that his death may have been prevented if a nurse, who was assigned to monitor him, had not made the careless error, according to attorney Charles Kelly of Hersh & Hersh in San Francisco.

The complaint states that George Thraikill was admitted to Novato Community with internal bleeding on Jan. 23, 2005. After spending a few days in the intensive care unit, George Thraikill was deemed stable and transferred to a regular room. The lawsuit said that Marc Tartarian, patient care services director, approved the move, and George Thraikill was placed on a heart monitor.

On Jan. 29, 2005, the monitor registered a signal disruption, sending a message to the intensive care unit monitoring station that George Thraikill needed attention.

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A floor nurse was alerted and went to his room, did not see him, assumed he had gone into the bathroom, and left, according to the complaint.

"Mr. Thraikill was actually lying on the other side of the bed having a heart attack," the complaint reads. "He ultimately was not discovered for another seven minutes by which time it was too late to save his life."

Diane Thraikill is seeking damages as determined by the court for the negligence that caused the death of her husband.

"Why the nurse didn't walk around to the other side of the bed and make an effort to thoroughly check for Mr. Thraikill's whereabouts is unbelievable, and is a question that will forever haunt Mr. Thraikill's family," Kelly said. "This disturbing closing chapter for Mr. Thraikill, and the nurse's lack of responsiveness, will remain a sad and unanswered question for his wife, children and grandchildren. The hospital failed in their responsibility to provide the medical attention that Mr. Thraikill

desperately needed by not responding properly to notification that the patient was in obvious, immediate need of urgent medical attention."

Kathryn Graham, a spokeswoman for Novato Community, said the hospital does not comment on pending litigation.

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