

Lawsuit alleges negligent death of mother of 2 at Port Huron hospital

Posted May 14, 2020



McLaren Port Huron

By [Cole Waterman | Cole.Waterman@mlive.com](mailto:Cole.Waterman@mlive.com)

PORT HURON, MI — A lawsuit has been filed against McLaren Port Huron, alleging the hospital's staff was negligent and contributed to death of a 26-year-old woman in 2017.

Detroit attorney Brian McKeen on May 14 filed the suit on behalf of the estate of Maria G. Handley against the hospital, Physician Healthcare Network in Fort Gratiot, Dr. Paul Jerry, and Cassandra L. Herman, a physician assistant. The suit was filed in St. Clair County Circuit Court.

The suit alleges Handley on the afternoon of March 15, 2017, arrived at the hospital's emergency room with clear signs of infection that included 102.4-degree fever, increased heart rate, and decreased blood pressure. A chest X-ray on Handley showed infiltrates in the upper lobe of her right lung, indicative of pneumonia, the suit states.

However, a complete blood count (CBD) test was not performed, which would have shown the degree of the infection and the type of bacteria causing it, the suit alleges.

Handley had had her spleen removed in 2006 due to spherocytosis, a hereditary disease that affects the shape of red blood cells. As such, her immune system was already greatly compromised, the suit alleges.

Handley had also been hospitalized six weeks beforehand for the C-section delivery of her son, the second of her two children. She had been diagnosed with pneumonia prior to being discharged, the suit states.

Hospital staff “ignored the signs of Maria’s precarious, asplenic condition” and did not do laboratory testing that “would have shown the degree of the infection and the type of bacteria causing the infection,” according to a facilitation summary written by attorney J. Kelly Carley, of McKeen & Associates P.C.

Handley was discharged and sent home with an oral antibiotic. The following evening, Handley collapsed in her bathroom and her son’s father took her back to the hospital, where she was found to be in septic shock, the summary states.

Handley was then taken via helicopter to Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and was admitted there on the afternoon of March 17, 2017. She died there on the morning of March 18, 2017, from complications of pneumonia, [according to her obituary](#). Her daughter was 5 and her son 46 days old at the time.

“The result was tragic, yet not unexpected,” the summary states. “Maria’s compromised immune system was overwhelmed by bacteria leading to septic shock and ultimately her death.”

The summary alleges Handley’s estate is entitled to a medical malpractice cap of \$812,500, plus economic damages totaling \$9,817,975.08.

“This is one of the worst cases of negligence I have come across in my decades proving medical malpractice,” attorney McKeen said. “Maria would have survived if she was treated properly and thoroughly and her condition considered thoughtfully. Patients like Maria who have had their spleen removed are particularly vulnerable, so it is imperative whenever there are any signs of infection they be admitted to the hospital. This young woman had obvious signs of infection and it is unfathomable why any care provider would let her leave the hospital under any circumstances. The fact that her condition was not taken seriously and her medical history not acknowledged in her treatment is deplorable.”

McLaren Port Huron declined to comment on the lawsuit.