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FACES OF MEDICAL MALPRACTICE: WASHINGTON, DC - OCTOBER 2009

ARKANSAS

Quanisha Scott

Participant: Francae Cook, Mother
Little Rock, AR



In 2007, 29-year-old Quanisha Scott underwent a partial thyroidectomy to remove a goiter at a hospital in Little Rock, AR. Twelve hours later, she began to develop a shortness of breath and began feeling her neck tighten. Despite complaints to the nurses, her condition was not appropriately monitored or reported to a physician. She went into respiratory arrest and suffered severe brain damage. It was later discovered that she had a hematoma at the site of the surgery. She is now bed-ridden and totally dependent on her mother for care. Their case settled.

CALIFORNIA

Steve Olsen

Participants: Steve, Kathy Olsen, Mother and Stephanie Olsen, Sister
Chula Vista, CA



Steven Olsen, now 18-years-old, is blind and brain-damaged because an HMO refused to give him an \$800 CAT scan when he was two years old. He had fallen on a stick in the woods while hiking. In 2001, Steven had 74 doctor visits, 164 physical and speech therapy appointments and three trips to the emergency room. His mother, Kathy, had to leave her job to care for him. He must be watched constantly. The jury awarded Steven \$7.1 million in non-economic compensation for his doomed life of darkness, loneliness, pain, physical retardation and around-the-clock supervision. However, the judge was forced to reduce the amount to \$250,000 because of a law capping non-economic damages in the state.

Colorado

Lauren Lollini
Denver, CO



Lauren Lollini went to a Denver hospital for kidney stone surgery in February of 2009. Six weeks later, Lollini's health began to deteriorate with feelings of exhaustion and a loss of appetite. After a week of her illness, she became jaundiced and had an inflamed liver. The doctors at an urgent care clinic diagnosed her with hepatitis C. Thirty-five other patients became infected with Hepatitis C at the hospital. A state investigation revealed that the outbreak began with a hospital staff person who had used hospital syringes and painkillers for drug use. Her case is pending.

Jim McDonough
Participants: Jim and Vicki McDonough
Commerce City, CO



In 1997, Jim McDonough had an operation to remove a calcified growth from his neck, which his doctor said could be cancerous. The operation left him paralyzed from the chest down. A jury ruled that he did not have cancer and that the surgery was unnecessary. He is now in a wheel chair and completely dependent upon others for care. The jury awarded him \$5.8 million. Due to the "cap" on compensation in Colorado, this was reduced greatly.

Michael Skolnik

Participant: Patricia Skolnik, Mother
Centennial, CO



Michael Skolnik underwent unnecessary brain surgery at the hands of a surgeon who, they later learned, was not qualified to diagnose or treat the illness for which he insisted Michael needed surgery. This marked the beginning of a 32-month nightmare of brain surgeries, infections, pulmonary embolisms, respiratory arrest, partial blindness, paralysis, psychosis, severe seizure disorder, short-term memory loss, multiple organ failure, thalamic pain syndrome and total dependence and disability. Michael could not eat, speak, or move anything but

his right hand. Nearly every day during this traumatic time, Michael used his sole limb control to shape his fingers into a gun, and hold them to his temple. He had the cognitive ability of a third grader. Michael died in 2001.

Connecticut**Sadie Cole**

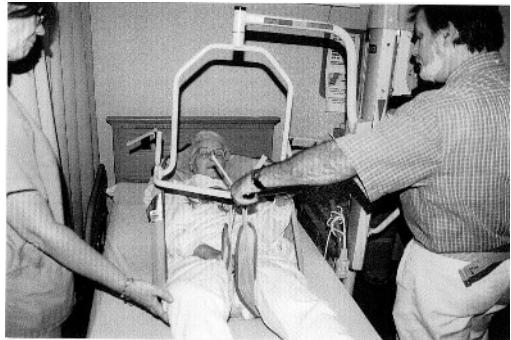
Participant: Herman Cole, Husband

Sadie Cole checked into the hospital in 1998 to undergo tubal ligation. Her blood pressure dropped dangerously and damagingly low during the procedure but, according to the anesthesiologist's own testimony, he had turned off all the audible alarms. Then, he proceeded to remove the monitors altogether, even though Sadie was unresponsive. By the time medical staff realized she wasn't breathing, Sadie had already suffered severe, irreversible brain damage. Sadie slipped into a coma and is in vegetative state.

The hospital and anesthesiologist settled with the family, but the doctor remained on the hospital's staff. In 2003, while Sadie's case was still pending, the same doctor was involved in another similar incident which left another young woman with permanent, severe brain damage. Although never disciplined regarding Sadie's injuries, the doctor's license was suspended and then surrendered after a state investigation of the 2003 incident found he disconnected monitor alarms and failed to monitor the patient's respiration. Years earlier, he had been permitted to practice in Massachusetts under a probationary agreement that required close supervision and monitoring of prescription drug use, because of earlier abuse of tranquilizers, but when he moved to Connecticut, he was granted a full license without restriction.

Patient: Catherine Devlin

**Participant: Reverend Mike Moran, Son-in-Law
New Milford, CT**



In February of 2004, Catherine Devlin fell and broke her hip and was admitted to the hospital. The next day, an x-ray was taken of her leg, which revealed an abnormality in the bone below the break. She was still scheduled for surgery a couple days later and was weaned from Cumidin, which she was taking because of a heart valve replacement, and put on heparin. The surgeon looked at the x-ray and said he could not operate because of the abnormality in the bone below the break, so the surgery was canceled. Her physician ordered that the heparin protocol be restarted. A nurse administered a dose of heparin that was five times more than the proper dose and this caused Catherine to suffer a stroke. No one noticed that she was having a stroke until the evening when her physician came in to see her and she was rushed to another hospital.

Since being released from the hospital, she requires a lift to get in and out of bed, always wears a diaper, and needs a wheelchair to go anywhere. Catherine's family's case settled.

**Jamie Pfeiffer
Bridgewater, CT**

Jamie Pfeiffer went to see her orthopedist for a problem with her leg. After examination by the orthopedist, Jamie was told that her leg was normal. She came back a few months later with persistent abnormal, swelling in her leg. He conducted an MRI and had the results reviewed by a radiologist. The radiologist told Jamie that the MRI showed some fluid, but no action could be taken. For two years, she continued to have problems with her leg and back. Finally she went to another physician, who informed her that she had a tumor. By that time, the tumor had spread from a small, operable tumor to one that surrounded her entire femur. An above-the-knee amputation was required, as well as aggressive chemotherapy. Jamie is in a wheelchair and still suffers from pain. Her case settled.

Katie Tyra
Participant: William Tyra
Trumbull, CT



Katie Tyra, the healthy 16-year-old daughter of Marine colonel, William Tyra, went into Walter Reed Hospital in Fairfax, VA in 1998 to have a benign cyst removed from her neck. The anesthesiologist gave her an excessive dose of the antibiotic, clindamycin. She had a cardiac arrest and died before the medical team had the opportunity to perform the surgery. The family was initially told that Katie's death was an "act of God." In 2001, the anesthesiologist pleaded guilty for lying about the dosage he prescribed to Katie. An inspector general's report also found that Katie's surgeon had improperly altered her medical records after her death to make it appear as if she had been given a much smaller dosage. Their civil case settled.

Florida

Ed Imbertson
Participant: Jacqueline Imbertson, Widow
West Palm Beach, FL

In 1999, Ed Imbertson went into the hospital for cardiac surgery. The surgery was successful and Ed was prescribed the IV medication hespan to restore his normal blood volume as he recovered from surgery. Instead of giving Ed the chart ordered medication, the hospital staff gave him a concentrated form of the anesthetic, lidocaine. Since the wrong medication was not mixed with a solvent, he was given an excessive dose and immediately went into cardiac arrest. Ed spent the next seven years in constant pain and had part of his leg removed. He died in 2006. Their case settled.

Louisiana

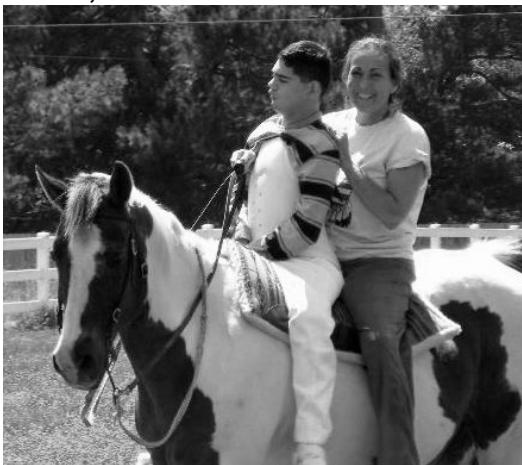
**Merlyna Adams
La Place, LA**



On August 13, 2007, Merlyna Adams, a school principle, experienced a sharp pain in her right side. The next day, her primary care doctor ordered a CT scan, which revealed that she had a 10mm kidney stone. Over the next few days, she was transferred to several different hospitals. At the fourth hospital, she remained in ICU for nearly three weeks. Her body developed sepsis, a complication caused by infection. She suffered congestive heart failure, renal failure and pulmonary failure. The restricted blood flow to her hands and feet required her to have both legs

amputated below the knee and she lost both hands. She now requires 24-hour care. She is unable to engage in everyday tasks like brushing her teeth, taking a bath, eating or using the restroom without another person. Her case settled.

Andre Sattler
Participants: Andre and parents, Annette and Peter Sattler
Eunice, LA



Annette Sattler was pregnant with two identical twins, Adam and Andre. During Annette's pregnancy, the ultra sound tech consistently reported that she was carrying two healthy fraternal twins. Eight months into her pregnancy, she went in for an ultra sound visit where it was discovered that Adam had died. When Annette was told of this, she started labor. After several hours in labor, the birth process was proceeding at too slow of a pace. It was decided to give her medication to induce labor. A fetal monitor was placed on Andre. Andre's heart rate dropped several times yet nothing was done. After a few hours,

the doctor came in to the room and showed concern for the fetal distress and decided to perform a c-section. Andre was born with severe brain damage.

A neurologist told Annette that Adam had died of a twin-to-twin transfusion that was evident in the weekly ultra sounds, but was not identified by the doctors and thus, went untreated. The deterioration of Adams body caused a clot in Andre's brain starving some areas of oxygen. As a result, Andre has cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and microcephaly. Andre suffers from seizures regularly and must be fed through a gastro feeding tube. He is completely dependent on others for his care. Their case settled.

Nebraska

Colin Gourley

**Participants: Colin, Lisa, and Michael Gourley
Valley, NE**



Fifteen-year-old Colin Gourley suffered terrible complications at birth as a result of a doctor's negligence. He has cerebral palsy. He cannot walk. He could not speak until he was five. Irregular brain waves and the amount of time he has spent in a wheelchair have affected his bone growth. He has been through five surgeries and needs to sleep in a cast every night to prevent further orthopedic problems. His twin brother, Connor, survived without injury.

A jury ruled that Colin was a victim of medical negligence, finding that \$5.625 million was needed to compensate him for his medical care and a lifetime of suffering. The Nebraska Supreme Court upheld a Nebraska law that severely cut this jury verdict to one quarter of what Colin will need. As a result, Colin will have to rely on the state for assistance for the rest of his life.

Oregon

Brenda Ross **Molalla, OR**



In October 1999, Brenda Ross had Lasik eye surgery performed by a Portland-area ophthalmologist. The technician who set the blade for the surgery had only been on staff two days and did not assemble the device properly. The device cut deeply into her eye. To make matters worse, Brenda later found out that she was not a good candidate for the surgery in the first place. The operation was designed for people whose pupils are much smaller than hers. Brenda suffered permanent damage and distortion of vision. Her case settled.

Virginia

Blake Fought

**Participants: Mark and Amy Fought, Parents
Blacksburg, VA**



Blake Fought was a 19-year-old with an illness that required that he be hospitalized and given liquids and nutrition through an IV line placed through his neck. When he had recovered from his illness and was ready to go home, the hospital sent a nurse to remove the IV line. Unfortunately, the nurse had never been properly trained to remove such a line and she did not follow proper procedure.

When Blake began to gasp for air, the nurses failed to respond, telling Blake he was anxious and needed to calm down. Due to the improper procedure, a bubble of air had entered Blake's

blood vessels and traveled to his heart. In front of the nurses and his own parents, who were there to take their son home, Blake asphyxiated and died.

Cara Leigh

**Participants: Wil and Lisa Searcy, Parents
Scottsville, VA**



Cara Leigh, the 4-year-old daughter of Wil and Lisa Searcy, had one of her kidneys removed. The ureter attached to that kidney was reattached to the remaining kidney. While still at the hospital, she began leaking urine into her abdomen from the ureter re-attachment. Her belly swelled with fluid, making it difficult for her to breathe. Electrolytes which should have been excreted with her urine were being reabsorbed into her blood through her abdominal wall, destroying the delicate chemical balances in her blood. Despite several calls to the surgical team from Cara's nurse, Cara was allowed to deteriorate for approximately 16 hours after her difficulty breathing was first identified. She died from cardiac arrest.