

Belcamp woman suffered 'devastating' injuries

\$3.5 million verdict in malpractice case

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A Harford County jury has awarded a Belcamp woman more than \$3.5 million in damages in a medical malpractice suit against two prominent Bel Air doctors.

After 12 days of testimony and nine hours of deliberation, the six-member jury agreed to award Victoria B. Little, of the 1200 block of Annhurst Court in Belcamp, \$3,557,398 in damages from Dr. Mark Gonze and Dr. Roger Schneider, of Vascular Surgery Associates LLC in Bel Air.

Schneider is also chairman of the Board of Directors of Upper Chesapeake Health, which operates Harford County's two hospitals, Upper Chesapeake Medical Center in Bel Air and Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace.

"I haven't heard of any bigger" awards, Harford County Circuit Court Judge Stephen M. Waldron, who presided over the two-week trial, said Thursday after it was over.

The jury awarded Little \$224,398 for medical expenses incurred in the past; \$2 million for medical and other expenses (including home modifications or cars with special accommodations); and \$1,333,000 million for pain and suffering.

Maryland puts caps on pain and suffering, and Waldron said in this case the estimated maximum amount Little could receive is \$680,000.

On July 16, 2007, Little, a longtime Harford County resident, went to Upper Chesapeake Medical Center for an aortobifemoral bypass, James Cardea, a lawyer with Schochor, Federico and Staton PA in Baltimore, said Thursday after the trial. Little had a blockage in her aorta, the main artery out of her heart, and was having a procedure done to bypass the blockage and restore the blood flow to her legs.

Little, a patient at Vascular Surgery Associates, opted to have the surgery, during which she lost 5,100 milliliters of blood, "more than her total blood volume in her body," Cardea said.

As a result, Cardea said, Little suffered from a prolonged period of low blood pressure and a loss of oxygen to her tissues and organs, which ultimately led to a spinal cord injury.

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It was the result of Gonze's and Schneider's improper surgical technique and negligence in failing to respond to Little's massive blood loss that resulted in the injury, Cardea said.

Little is confined to a wheelchair and won't be able to walk again.

"We are both very pleased for Ms. Little. She suffered devastating and permanent injuries from which she will never recover," Cardea said.

His partner, Scott Kurlander, said "as far as we know it's the largest verdict in Harford County."