

Jury awards woman \$3.5 million malpractice verdict Surgery complications left her paraplegic, lawyers say

By Tricia Bishop, The Baltimore Sun
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A 53-year-old Harford County woman won a \$3.5 million medical malpractice verdict on Thursday against two surgeons and their business, Vascular Surgery Associates.

Victoria Little underwent surgery for blocked arteries in 2007, with disastrous results, according to her Baltimore attorneys. She filed a lawsuit in Harford County Circuit Court in 2008. And Thursday, after nine hours of deliberation, a civil jury held two doctors responsible for Little's injuries: Dr. Roger E. Schneider, chairman of Upper Chesapeake Health System, and his partner, Dr. Mark D. Gonze.

Little's lawyers, James Cardea and Scott Kurlander, claim that the doctors used an improper grafting technique. They say that led to blood loss and various injuries, including damage to Little's spinal cord, which left Little paraplegic and unable to walk.

She still has some feeling in her legs, Kurlander said in a telephone interview, but she is in constant pain.

Little walked in to the hospital in "4-inch heels and she was never able to walk out," Kurlander said, adding that the verdict has given his client a sense of security. The jury awarded Little \$1.3 million in noneconomic damages, \$2 million for future medical bills, and more than \$200,000 for her prior bills.

An attorney for the doctors, E. Philip Franke III, said that the complication that occurred during Little's aorta surgery is known to happen "in the best of hands" and that the technique used was appropriate.

"This is a nice lady who had a poor outcome, but it was not malpractice by these two well-trained surgeons," Franke said. "We are reviewing the case for appeal."

Franke said he also expects the amount awarded to be reduced as a matter of law.

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