

Settlement of Dissecting Aortic Aneurysm Settlement

Doe v. Surgeon Without Vascular Subspecialty

While working on his car on Sunday, November 21, 1999, Ed Doe was stricken with throat and jaw pain. He also experienced difficulty breathing, flank pain and weakness in his knees that made it difficult to stand.

Ed Doe was transported to the Williamsport Hospital and Medical Center Emergency Room and his care was transferred to Michael Haas, R.N. at 1:03 pm.

A CT was performed without contrast due to an iodine allergy. The radiologist testified that the CT scan was suggestive, but not diagnostic of a dissection. After discussing the CT scan results with the radiologist, the surgeon ordered an abdominal ultrasound. The radiologist, in his deposition, indicated that he had suggested further studies to rule out the possibility of a dissection, including angiography with anesthesia standby or a transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE). The radiologist further testified that he conveyed this information to the emergency room physician, who admitted Ed Doe.

Family members then gathered at the hospital. They were told that Mr. Doe had an aneurysm that was serious but operable.

The surgeon aggressively questioned Mr. Doe regarding his allergy to iodine. He was rude to the family. The surgeon indicated that Mr. Doe did not need surgery. He said there was some plaque that showed up, and that was all. The surgeon explained that Mr. Doe's care would be turned over to a second-year resident with the internal medicine teaching service.

Plaintiffs' board-certified thoracic and cardiac expert opined, "Once a dissecting aneurysm enters the differential diagnosis list, as it did with Mr. Doe, it becomes imperative to delineate the anatomy of the aortic arch as expeditiously as possible. A timely TEE would have most assuredly culminated with a definitive diagnosis."

No transesophageal echocardiogram or consult with a cardiothoracic surgeon was ever ordered.

Mr. Doe's wife was deceased, although he did have a pension from a railroad. He was 67 years old at the time of his death.

There were claims of infliction of emotional distress by family members who witnessed the care being given, the behavior of the surgeon, and ultimately the code.

The case was settled for \$675,000.