

## Verdicts & Settlements

# Woman's infection misdiagnosed as Raynaud's Syndrome

### \$2.25 million settlement

On Oct. 1, 2013, the decedent, a 41-year-old woman, sought treatment at a medical clinic due to symptoms of infection, as well as pain in her feet, difficulty in walking, and lack of sensation in her fingers. She had a bluish-purple skin discoloration around her mouth and nose.

At the time of her examination, however, her vital signs were recorded as normal.

The decedent's spleen had been removed years earlier following a car accident. The defendant physician who examined her noted her splenectomy in his record of the visit.

A person who has undergone a splenectomy is more susceptible to death from infection,

especially pneumonia.

The defendant treating physician did not diagnose the decedent with an infection. He did not order a blood culture or antibiotics, or refer her to a hospital emergency room for further evaluation. Instead, he diagnosed a benign condition known as Raynaud's Syndrome, which causes some areas of the body, including extremities, to feel numb and cool in response to cold temperatures or stress. He sent her home with instructions for treating the condition.

The decedent died at home two days later of a bacterial infection. An autopsy concluded that she died of streptococcus pneumoniae sepsis.

The plaintiff alleged that the defendant physician deviated from the standard of care by failing to diagnose the decedent's

infection and by diagnosing her with Raynaud's Syndrome.

The decedent's husband was prepared to testify that they sought treatment at the clinic instead of an emergency room based on his review of the clinic's website, which stated that all its physicians were board-certified in emergency medicine, though the defendant physician who examined her was not.

The plaintiff pursued claims against the health clinic for negligent hiring, intentional misrepresentation and deceit, and violations of Chapter 93A.

The defendants argued that due to the fact that the decedent's vital signs were completely normal at the time of the visit, the defendant physician was not negligent in failing to diagnose the infection. They asserted that the decedent's failure to obtain

further medical treatment as her condition continued to worsen at home for two days caused or contributed to her death.

At the time of her death, the decedent left behind her husband and 2-year-old son.

The case settled at mediation after the depositions of the defendants but before the deposition of the plaintiff.

**Action:** Medical malpractice

**Injuries alleged:** Wrongful death, loss of consortium

**Case name:** Withheld

**Court/case no.:** Withheld

**Jury and/or judge:** N/A (settled)

**Amount:** \$2.25 million

**Date:** July 11, 2017

**Attorneys:** Jeffrey N. Catalano and Christine Thompson, of Todd & Weld, Boston, (for the plaintiff)



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