

## DOCTORS FAIL TO DIAGNOSE AND TREAT DEADLY INFECTION

Casi Renee Oakes was a beautiful little four-year-old girl struggling with autism and unable to speak. In April 1999, Casi had an ear infection and was under the care of her primary pediatrician, Dr. Eric Rydland. After six weeks, Casi's condition had not improved, and on June 11th, when her fever spiked, her parents brought her back to the pediatrician's office. Despite indications of an infection and recurring fevers, Dr. Rydland did not prescribe antibiotics for the child. Instead, the doctor ordered irrelevant, non-urgent laboratory tests.

That night, Casi's condition worsened and early the next morning her parents called for an ambulance to take her to the emergency room at the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital (JDCH). She was examined by Dr. Asif Abdulla Suchedina, the hospital's emergency room physician. Casi's symptoms, which included a high fever, bouts of screaming (indicating distress), limp extremities, and a high white blood-cell count, clearly evidenced the possibility of bacterial meningitis. The standard of care for meningitis requires an urgent medical response, including obtaining and analyzing cultures, performing a spinal tap, and the administration of potent antibiotics.

The emergency room records at JDCH noted that both Casi's mother and her pediatrician, Dr. Rydland, had requested that the hospital admit the child for treatment. The child, however, was kept in the emergency room while various other procedures were done, none of which would help her fight off the rapid and deadly progression of bacterial growth. Casi remained in the emergency room for seven hours before she was admitted to the hospital's pediatric intensive care unit for further treatment.

By this time, however, treatment was too late. On June 13, 1999, four-year-old Casi Oakes died of meningitis, her mom and dad at her side. Casi was the center of their life and the parents' grief was unimaginable. Faced with the devastating fact that their little girl would still be alive if the doctors and hospital had acted with responsible, appropriate, and timely treatment, Casi's parents filed an action against the doctors and the hospital for medical negligence, including failure to diagnose meningitis and failure to admit and properly treat their child in a timely manner. Attorneys Chris Searcy and Darryl Lewis represented the parents. The case was settled, after very intense litigation, for a confidential amount. The settlement will not, of course, heal the pain suffered from the loss of their child. A foundation called "Casi's Quest" was set up to provide support and funding for the research, treatment, and prevention of autism and other autoimmune disorders. For more information, visit Casi's Quest (TAAP of Florida) [www.taap.info](http://www.taap.info). ■



**Casi Renee Oakes**

## ACCOLADES



### **Greg Barnhart**

Greg Barnhart was appointed in September to the Florida Supreme Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules and Policy - Voluntary Trial Resolution Subcommittee. The Subcommittee evaluates the merits, problems and issues of permitting parties to a lawsuit to hire their own judge and conduct a private trial. This system was adopted in California in the 1980's and has met with some success. It would only be used with the consent of all parties, but may offer too much secrecy and may induce the best judges to leave the bench for the more lucrative private trials. ■



### **Earl Denney**

Earl Denney was recently elected president of the Palm Beach Area Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The mission of the Society is to find a cure for leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and to improve the quality of life for patients and their families. Mr. Denney has served on the Society's board of directors since 2003 and looks forward to his new responsibilities as its president. ■



### **Patrick Quinlan**

Patrick Quinlan was recently appointed to the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Professionalism Council. He looks forward to serving on a panel committed to furthering the ideals and goals of the legal profession. ■



### **Laurie Briggs**

Laurie Briggs has joined the board of directors for Friends of Abused Children, Inc. "Friends" improves the lives of abused, neglected, and abandoned children throughout Palm Beach County. The organization contributes to the development, enrichment, and self-esteem of children at risk, helping them overcome the effects of abuse and neglect. ■