

Hysterectomy Leads to Incontinence and Multiple Surgeries

In June of 1998, Mrs. C was experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding as a result of fibroid tumors. On the advice of Doctor B, Mrs. C consented to undergo a total abdominal hysterectomy and bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy. Doctor B and Doctor T performed the procedure on June 24, 1998, at Palm Beach Gardens Community Hospital.

Approximately a week after her discharge from the hospital, Mrs. C began having difficulty controlling her urine flow. She contacted her urologist, Doctor J on July 9. He prescribed additional medications in an attempt to assist with the bladder control problem. Unfortunately, by July 13, Mrs. C had lost all bladder control. Though she had no urge to urinate, urine was literally pouring out of her. She returned to see Doctor B, and learned for the first time that a suture placed during her hysterectomy may have penetrated her bladder and a vesicovaginal fistula (tear) had formed.

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The following day, Mrs. C returned to the hospital for more testing. She met with Doctor J to discuss how they would treat the perforated bladder. In an attempt to avoid a follow-up surgery, Doctor J ordered Mrs. C to utilize a Foley catheter for ten days in hopes that the perforation in her bladder would close

spontaneously. During the ten day period, Mrs. C was restricted to her home, utilizing the catheter and wearing diapers.

By July 24, it was clear to Doctor J that the hole in Mrs. C's bladder was not closing. Doctor J scheduled another follow-up surgery. During the five hour procedure, Doctor J surgically repaired the perforated bladder, and Mrs. C was discharged on Aug. 6.

Sometime thereafter, Mrs. C began leaking urine again, and she immediately returned to Doctor J. The doctor found yet another fistula. Given the extent of difficulty Mrs. C had experienced already, Doctor J referred Mrs. C to a specialist in bladder repair at Duke University.

On April 29, 1999, almost a full year after her hysterectomy, the Duke University physician successfully repaired Mrs. C's bladder and finally brought her incontinence to an end.

After enduring a year of seemingly avoidable medical care, Mr. and Mrs. C retained the services of attorneys Chris Searcy and Karen Terry. Suit was filed against Doctor B and Doctor T. An expert in obstetrics/gynecology hired by the plaintiffs opined that Doctor B and Doctor T should have verified the integrity of Mrs. C's bladder before completing her hysterectomy. Furthermore, Doctor J gave deposition testimony confirming that Doctor B and Doctor T put stitches in two different places, perforating Mrs. C's bladder. Though Doctor B and Doctor T contested liability throughout litigation, Mr. and Mrs. C's case was settled for a confidential sum. ■

Man Dies While Vacationing In Florida

In February of 1998, James Keenan and Jim Matthews had arrived in Vero Beach, Fla. with their wives for a winter vacation. They were close friends in Arlington, Va.

On the afternoon of Feb. 28, Mr. Matthews and Mr. Keenan had played golf earlier in the day. They were driving home to meet their wives. Mr. Matthews was the driver and Mr. Keenan was the passenger. Mr. Matthews approached Old Dixie Highway from a side street and stopped before crossing the railroad tracks. He then proceeded to cross, but failed to stop at a stop sign on the other side of the tracks. For an unexplained reason, Mr. Matthews traveled through the stop sign and right into the path of a northbound vehicle traveling at approximately 45 mph.

The force of the impact sent the Matthew's vehicle spinning across the intersection and ending up off the side of the road, more than 100 feet away. As a result of this brief moment of inattention, both Mr. Keenan and Mr. Matthews died.

Mr. Keenan was age 73 and Mr. Matthews was 79. Mr. Keenan was survived by his wife of almost forty years, Mary Keenan.

It was found that there was adequate insurance on Mr. Matthews' vehicle. When Virginia counsel was unable to reach a satisfactory settlement on behalf of Mrs. Keenan, attorney Chris Speed was retained to file a lawsuit in Indian River County. The lawsuit progressed through the initial discovery phases. Two weeks before trial, Mr. Speed was able to effect a settlement on behalf of Mrs. Keenan in the amount of \$550,000. ■