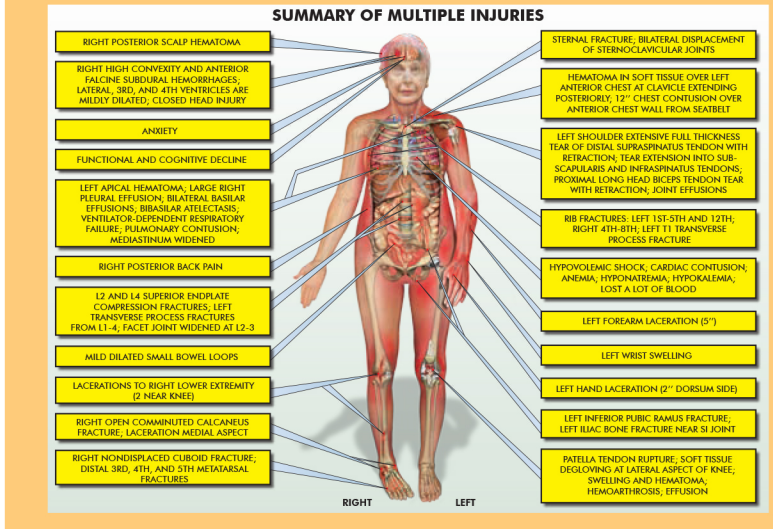


Violent car crash leaves victim in hospital and rehabilitation facility for almost six months

On an early afternoon in March 2013, Jane Smith (not her real name) was driving home after spending the afternoon with a friend enjoying a show at the Kravis Center for Performing Arts in West Palm Beach, Florida. At 79 years of age, Jane was an active and independent woman. She and her husband regularly entertained friends, exercised, and maintained a full social calendar. After dropping her friend off, Jane was only minutes away from her own home in Hobe Sound. As she drove northbound in the inside lane of U.S. Highway One, a southbound vehicle crossed the narrow grassy median and struck Jane's car head-on. The high-speed collision was instantaneous and witnesses later said that there was nothing Jane could have done to avoid the oncoming car.

The force of the collision was so violent that witnesses did not expect anyone to survive. In fact, the driver of the southbound car died as a result of the accident. The driver, a woman returning from an errand on behalf of her employer, was heading back to her office in a company-owned vehicle. Later inspection of the wreckage excluded a mechanical problem with her car. There would be no explanation as to why the southbound vehicle crossed the median, hitting Jane's car.

Miraculously, Jane survived the impact, but just barely. She was taken by ambulance to St. Mary's Medical Center for emergency care. Her injuries were extensive and overwhelming, literally extending from head to toe. A closed-head injury resulted in bleeding and swelling in the brain; fortunately, the head injury did not require surgery. She did suffer 25 broken bones – seven vertebra fractures, five bones in her right foot, ten rib fractures, two pelvic



fractures, and a fractured sternum. Jane also suffered internal injuries. She teetered on the edge of death for weeks in the hospital's intensive care unit, with doctors preparing the family for the worst. She was kept on a ventilator to assist her with breathing. The doctors worried that if she did survive, she would suffer profound physical and mental limitations for life. But Jane is a fighter. She endured numerous surgeries and procedures to repair her badly broken body.

As Jane struggled to regain her health, her family contacted SDSBS attorneys **Chris Searcy** and **Jack Hill** seeking to protect Jane's rights and to hold the responsible parties accountable for the harm she suffered. The attorneys took immediate steps to document and preserve physical evidence at the accident scene and, through discovery, to solidify the issues of liability.

After 55 days in the hospital, Jane was well enough to be transferred to a rehabilitation hospital in Martin County. She was determined to get back as much normal functioning as she could, and she worked tirelessly in countless therapy sessions to re-learn basic movements including walking and getting out of a chair. She spent 109 days at the rehabilitation hospital and finally regained enough function to return home. Jane eventually was able to drive, to socialize with friends and family, and resume her visits to the theater. Her recovery is miraculous, but she is still left with significant limitations. She cannot stand for long periods of time, and her balance is diminished. This requires her to have outside help to assist her around her house. The mounting medical and rehabilitation bills, and the loss of her independence, weigh heavily on her mind.

In the months following the crash, Mr. Searcy and Mr. Hill filed suit on behalf of Jane Smith in Palm Beach County Circuit Court against the responsible parties including the employer of the southbound driver. Ultimately, the case was resolved for a confidential amount in the weeks leading up to trial on damages only. With the case behind her, and resources to pay for future needs she may have, Jane is looking forward to once again enjoying her golden years. ♦

