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Doctors and Nurses at Schneider Hospital Sued After Patient's Death Following Pneumonia Admission

A civil complaint says Jahnai Niles returned to Schneider Hospital with pneumonia and ongoing respiratory symptoms, but records allegedly show no matching airway plan, delayed staff response after a fall, and no timely cardiac assessment.

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The Schneider Regional Medical Center.

Several doctors and nurses at the Schneider Regional Medical Center are being sued for malpractice following the death of a patient whose family says was not given the appropriate care for his condition and symptoms.

The civil complaint was filed last week in the territory's Superior Court. It names doctors Thomas Launch, Immett Habtes, and Michael Fisher as defendants, along with 10 unnamed nurses and staff. The lawsuit centers around the care received by Jahnai Niles, who died in October 2024 days after being admitted to hospital.

According to the complaint, Mr. Niles first presented himself at the Schneider Hospital emergency department in September 2024, complaining of chest tightness, shortness of breath, and a cough. The symptoms had been present for weeks, the lawsuit says. At this first visit, Mr. Niles was treated and discharged with a prescription for antibiotics and instructions to follow up.

Symptoms persisted, the complaint states, until Mr. Niles returned to hospital on October 15. He was admitted with reported "multifocal pneumonia with confluent lower lobe opacities, and recommended clinical correlation for aspiration," the lawsuit states. However, because of his persistent nausea and vomiting, a "gastrointestinal procedure" for Mr. Niles could not be scheduled until the following week.

Meanwhile, "the records do not reflect a protective airway and aspiration prevention plan that matched his ongoing emesis and the imaging findings that raised concern for aspiration," the complaint declared. What the records do show, the lawsuit continued on to state, was that an echocardiogram was ordered but reportedly not performed in time or at all. "The records do not reflect timely escalation to cardiology, ...or other steps to secure a timely assessment of ventricular function."

Complicating matters further, the lawsuit argues, sedatives for sleep were prescribed to a patient admitted for pneumonia with ongoing respiratory complaints. "The records do not reflect a monitoring plan that matched Mr. Niles' risk profile," the complaint argued. In addition to the allegedly substandard diagnostic and medical care, the lawsuit claims that Mr. Niles tried to stand, and fell. The call button was pressed for assistance, but "staff response was delayed." The patient was found unresponsive and without a pulse. He was unable to be resuscitated. His autopsy, the complaint states, found severe cardiomyopathy.

The lawsuit accuses the named doctors of medical malpractice, claiming they "breached the standard of care" by failing to address Mr. Niles' ailments with due care and attention. The lawsuit also accuses the medical practitioners of being responsible for Mr. Niles' wrongful death. The complaint asks the court to award damages to the estate of Mr. Niles for his pain and suffering, his loss of future income and earning capacity, and his medical and funeral expenses. His mother's mental pain and suffering is also included in consideration for damages.

As of press time, a legal response has not yet been filed by defendants.