

Woman whose limbs were amputated settles claim for \$7M

■ BY BILL CRESENZO

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Stafford

A woman whose hands and legs were amputated after she was incorrectly administered a drug used to treat septic shock has confidentially settled a claim against the treating medical center for \$7 million, her attorneys report.

Troy Stafford of DeVore, Acton and Stafford in Charlotte and Chad McGowan of McGowan, Hood and Felder in Rock Hill, South Carolina, said that their client, whose name was withheld pursuant to a confidentiality agreement, went to her local emergency room one morning in August 2016 because she was feeling sick. She was diagnosed with sepsis and septic shock and placed into intensive care shortly before being transferred to another hospital. By the time she arrived at the second hospital, gangrene had already begun to set in. It was several more days before doctors there diagnosed the source of the sepsis, which

turned out to be an infected uterine fibroid. Ultimately, both of her hands had to be amputated and both of her legs amputated below the knees.

The client sued the second hospital, alleging medical malpractice. She contended that the drugs that were prescribed to treat her weren't appropriate and one of those drugs, phenylephrine, wasn't called for and was actually harmful. She also alleged that nurses improperly administered and overdosed the drug Levophed, which is used to raise blood pressure and reduce blood flow to a patient's extremities when they are in septic shock. "If used correctly, the drug is life-saving, but it has to be controlled and modified literally on a five-minute basis," said McGowan, who said he has represented two other clients in recent years who had to have their limbs aborted because of the misuse of Levophed and is now representing a fourth client.



McGowan

The two sides reached a settlement in the case on Oct. 7, and McGowan said his client is now "learning to live life on her own, but she still needs a lot of help." Due to a confidentiality agreement, other details about the case, including the identities of the defendants and their attorneys and the location of the hospital, were not available, but McGowan said the hospital had initially contended that his client had waited too long before going to the emergency room and that blood clotting problems had caused the amputations. McGowan said his client had visited an urgent care clinic the day before she went to the emergency room, and was told that she likely had the flu. She was advised to go to an emergency room, but said she'd wait until the next morning to see if she felt better and was told that would be fine.

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SETTLEMENT REPORT — MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

Amount: \$7 million

Injuries alleged: Amputation of both legs and both hands

Case name: Withheld

Venue: Withheld

Date of settlement: Oct. 7

Most helpful experts: Kyle Happel, M.D. of New Orleans (critical care); Maya Jackson, R.N. of Atlanta (nursing); Jason James, M.D. of Miami (obstetrics); Michael Strieff, M.D. of Baltimore (hematology); and Raymond Sauer of Clemson, South Carolina (economics)

Attorneys for plaintiff: Troy Stafford of DeVore, Acton and Stafford in Charlotte and Chad McGowan of McGowan, Hood and Felder in Rock Hill, South Carolina

Attorneys for defendants: Withheld