

Cataract patient gets \$300,000 settlement

Complications from surgery led to suit

By JENNIFER V. HUGHES

Staff Writer

An 85-year-old woman who charged that complications from needless cataract surgery left her partially blind received a \$300,000 civil settlement this week.

Libby Karol of Fair Lawn filed the medical malpractice suit against Dr. Fred Newman of Hawthorne in 1999. The deal was reached Tuesday in state Superior Court, Hackensack. Newman's lawyer, Renee Sherman, would not talk about specifics of the case.

"Just because there is a settlement, there is no indication that the allegations are true," she said. "The allegations are all still denied."

According to state records, Newman has been licensed since 1977 and has never had any disciplinary action. He could not be reached for comment.

Karol's lawyer, Adam Slater, said his client went to see Newman in May 1997, suffering from cataracts caused by glaucoma. An operation was done on the right eye and there were some complications, but they were managed appropriately, he said.

But in October of that year, Slater said, Newman told Karol to come back for surgery for her other eye, even though her vision was 20/40 — an acceptable level that should not require surgery, he said. During the procedure, Slater said, the lens in Karol's eye broke and a piece fell into the back of her eye.

Slater said that is a known risk for the operation and that it must be treated immediately. Slater said Newman didn't refer Karol to a retinal specialist for two months. Slater said the doctor claimed he referred Karol to the specialist but that she was afraid and didn't go for two months.

Allegedly because of the delay, Karol is blind in her left eye. Her vision is 20/25 in her other eye. Before the second surgery, Karol was able to drive, but Slater said her activities are limited now.

"She's never going to be able to get her vision back," he said.

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