

# DAILY TIMES

## LAWSUITS

# Stroke victim wins \$7.4 million medical malpractice award

By [Alex Rose](#), Delaware County Daily Times

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MEDIA COURTHOUSE >> A Darby man who suffered a stroke in 2010 after leaving his physician's office with a blood pressure of 200/80 was awarded damages of \$7.4 million following a jury trial this week before Judge Angelos Spiros.

The award included \$350,000 for future loss of earnings, \$2.6 million for future medical expenses and \$3.5 million in other damages for Finis Cuff, who was 56 years old at the time of the stroke. The estate of his late wife, Pamela Cuff, was also awarded \$950,000.

Cuff's attorney, **Andrew J. Stern**, said his client suffered a massive ischemic stroke less than two days after his May 14, 2010, visit to Dr. Douglas L. Keagle, leaving him wheelchair bound for the rest of his life with serious brain damage and impaired arm function.

Stern said Cuff was at particularly high risk for stroke due to factors including his age, high cholesterol levels, smoking, slight obesity and diabetes that Keagle should have taken into account during the May visit.

Cuff had been Keagle's patient since 1995 and had previously shown blood pressure of 220/90 in October 2008 and 184/94 on April 16, 2010. At his April 2010 visit, Cuff was prescribed Lisinopril and told to return in four weeks.

Stern noted that his client was worried about some symptoms he had experienced shortly before his May 14 appointment, including dizziness, numbness and confusion. Cuff allegedly penned a note describing those symptoms with his wife and daughter to present to his doctor.

It is unclear what became of that note, but Cuff was again prescribed a combination of Lisinopril and Norvasc during the May visit and told to return in four weeks. Two days later, Cuff was rushed to the hospital with blocked cerebral arteries and blood pressure of 280/150.

Stern argued that Keagle failed to provide standard medical care when he allowed his client to leave the office without performing further diagnostic testing. He said Cuff's

blood pressure, taken with other risk factors, should have been an alarm bell for an impending stroke and that Keagle should have immediately had him hospitalized.

Frank Gerolamo, representing Keagle, argued his client had no motive whatsoever not to treat a patient with such high blood pressure who was describing the symptoms Cuff was allegedly experiencing.

Gerolamo posited that Cuff, possibly fearing hospitalization, either did not show Keagle the note or failed to relate his symptoms during the visit. Keagle did treat Cuff's high blood pressure with medication, Gerolamo noted.

The jury deliberated for less than five hours Wednesday and found both Keagle and Cuff were negligent, causing Cuff's injuries. The jury assigned 61 percent of the blame to Keagle, however.

Keagle maintained offices with Mercy Medical Associates at Darby and Mercy Health System of Southeastern Pennsylvania, both also named defendants.

Ann D'Antonio, senior director of marketing communications for Mercy Health System, issued this statement following the verdict: "The health and wellbeing of our patients is always our top priority. We continue to support Dr. Keagle and the quality, compassionate care he provides to his patients. While we are disappointed with this case's outcome, we will review the details of the finding and determine our next steps."