

Panos trial: 2 experts say infection didn't cause man's death

Written by John Ferro Poughkeepsie Journal
Mar. 22, 2014 |

poughkeepsiejournal.com

WHITE PLAINS — Two infectious disease specialists testified that a knee infection had no bearing on the death of a Dutchess County man whose widow is suing former orthopedic surgeon Spyros Panos and others.

The specialists, called on behalf of the defendants, also testified that based on their review of medical records and prior testimony, the doctors who saw Bernard Puiatti in the weeks before his death on Jan. 19, 2008, acted according to accepted medical practices.

Their testimony Friday came as a civil medical malpractice trial continued before Judge Lewis J. Lubell in state Supreme Court in White Plains.

Sylvia Puiatti of Pleasant Valley is suing Panos, both as an individual and as executor of her husband's estate. The other defendants in the case are Mid Hudson Medical Group, Vassar Brothers Medical Center and Dr. Julie Sim.

Bernard Puiatti was 78 when he died.

The case is one of more than 250 medical malpractice lawsuits pending against Panos.

Panos was sentenced earlier this month in Federal Court to 4 1/2 years in federal prison, followed by two years of supervised release, after he admitted to defrauding multiple health insurance providers of millions of dollars.

Under questioning from Panos' attorney, J. Peter Collins, Dr. Marc Tack of Kingston said he believed Bernard Puiatti's death was due to respiratory distress caused by pneumonia and a pulmonary hemorrhage.

"I don't believe the knee infection had anything to do with his death," Tack said.

Tack and Dr. Bruce Farber, an infectious disease specialist based in Manhasset, both testified that in their opinions, the infection found when Bernard Puiatti was admitted to Vassar Brothers Medical Center on Dec. 13, 2007, had not been caused by needles Panos had used to withdraw fluid from the knee on three prior occasions.

Farber, under questioning from attorney Chris Keenan, said he believed Bernard Puiatti's knee pain prior to the infection's discovery was caused by blood that had collected there.

John Ferro: 845-437-4816; jferro@poughkeepsiejournal.com; Twitter: @PoJoEnviro