Blowing The Whistle Or Inciting A Panic?

An NYU Medical Center doctor phoned her bosses' weight-loss surgery patients on the eve of their operations to warn them they could end up dead. Surgical resident Neelu Pal was so spooked after a lap-band surgery patient died in 2006 that she spent the weekend anonymously phoning patients scheduled for surgery that Monday.

What she said scared the patients - and got her fired. Pal filed a whistleblower lawsuit against NYU, claiming she was compelled to expose her bosses because they weren't explaining risks or giving proper post-operative care to patients.

Pal told one patient to think about having the surgery someplace else, according to court papers. The patients contacted by Pal are not identified in lawsuit papers in Manhattan federal court, but one is described as a top Bank of America executive.

Pal confessed to being the anonymous caller phoning patients after an NYU investigation fingered her, according to court documents. Her bosses described the calls as an attempt to scare patients into canceling their treatment and an example of unprofessional and irresponsible behavior.

The tragic patient, Rhonda Freiberg, died after going into cardiac arrest in January 2006. A review by the state Department of Health found NYU failed to properly monitor her in the hours after surgery and faulted her doctors for putting Freiberg on a regular medical floor after four hours of complex surgery. They did not respond to her negligible urine output, which signaled something was wrong. Pal assisted during the surgery and tried to alert Fielding to post-operative problems, her lawyer claims. NYU paid the patient’s family a $973,000 malpractice settlement.

Pal is now a law student in New Jersey.

Read the complete article, sourced from the NY Post, here [1].

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