Woman Falls Off O.R. Table, Sues Hospital

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — A woman sued a Connecticut hospital Tuesday, saying she was severely injured when she fell off an operating table after surgery.

Attorneys for 81-year-old Florence Fiedler of New Canaan filed the lawsuit against Yale-New Haven Hospital in New Haven Superior Court. The hospital said it apologized to the woman and implemented policy changes.

Fiedler had a pacemaker implanted in February 2010 and fell off the table after the surgery, according to the lawsuit. Her attorney said she suffered fractures of the hip and collarbone, a traumatic head injury that resulted in bleeding under her skull and other injuries.

The lawsuit says the hospital didn't implement policies and procedures to prevent Fiedler from falling and failed to recognize that Fiedler was not completely recovered from the surgical medications, which put her at increased risk for falling.

The lawsuit also alleges the hospital improperly left Fiedler unattended and said employees didn't put the operating table in the lowest position before allowing Fiedler to reposition herself.

Fiedler, a retired FBI administrator, has difficulty climbing stairs, had to relearn how to walk and is unable to drive a car or live in her own home, the lawsuit says. Before the surgery, she traveled extensively and now is a shut-in, her attorney said.

"You take an active vibrant woman in her golden years and you turn her into a very old woman because you don't pay attention," said attorney James Horwitz of the law firm Koskoff, Koskoff and Bieder. "That's terrible and it's outrageous."

Rob Hutchison, spokesman for Yale-New Haven Hospital, says the hospital promptly reported the incident to the state Department of Public Health Yale-New Haven Hospital and implemented a corrective action plan.

"Yale-New Hospital is committed to providing the safest and highest quality of care to its patients. The hospital deeply regrets this incident, and we have apologized to the patient," Hutchison said in a statement.

Yale-New Haven is the primary teaching hospital for Yale University's School of Medicine.

The lawsuit, which also names the university, seeks more than $15,000 in damages. A message was also left with Yale.

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