Retained Objects Costly For Patients And Surgeons

(AP) — A lawyer in Germany claims surgeons left up to 16 objects in her client's body after an operation for prostate cancer. She is seeking over $100,000, plus costs for the family of the patient, who has since died. Surgical slips such as these are rare, but with millions of operations performed worldwide each year, mistakes do sometimes occur. According to Loyola University in Chicago, citing medical studies, some 1,500 patients in the United States have surgical objects accidentally left inside them after surgery each year. Most of the objects are sponges.

Some other notable cases include:

- In December 2011, a man in Ohio who had two towels left in his body after surgery at a Veterans hospital. He won a $275,000 settlement from the federal government.
- In August 2012, California regulators fined a Fresno hospital $50,000 for leaving a towel in a patient after abdominal surgery.
- In September 2012, *The Canberra Times* of Australia reported that a patient required a second operation after a surgical instrument was left in the abdomen. The incident prompted Canberra hospitals to begin special training for staff to make sure they kept better track of instruments during surgery.
- In February 2010, doctors in the Czech Republic discovered a foot-long metal tube had been left inside a woman's abdomen five months after surgery. The chief of the clinic said four staff members had been punished.
- In March 2009, a Kentucky jury awarded a woman $2.5 million after she required surgery to remove a sponge left inside her after a hysterectomy three years earlier. Part of her small intestine had to be removed.

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