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Woman's family wins \$1M verdict

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HOBART -- A Lake County jury has awarded nearly \$1 million in a medical malpractice case to the family of a Merrillville woman who died at St. Mary Medical Center after her dentures became lodged in her throat.

The jury deliberated two hours before returning the verdict against the Hobart hospital last week, and awarding \$938,800 to Margaret Creviston's family.

"I feel it was a fair and correct decision," Creviston's husband, Ronald Creviston, said.

St. Mary is currently reviewing its options, including a possible appeal, and has not reached a decision as to the next step it will take, Merrillville Attorney James L. Hough said.

A medical review panel of three independent physicians found that the care Creviston received was appropriate and was not related, in any way, to her death, Hough said.

He said experts found that she died of her underlying lung disease.

He said St. Mary is committed to providing the highest quality health care to its patients.

Creviston, 55, died on Nov. 7, 2001, in the hospital's intensive care unit where she was admitted for a serious breathing problem after she suffered a mild heart attack.

Creviston suffered from a chronic lung disease and was placed on a breathing tube on Oct. 19, 2001. Her dentures remained in place until the tube was removed seven days later, said Merrillville Attorney David Holub, who represents Creviston's family.

Not long after the tube was removed, Holub said blood began running out of Creviston's mouth.

"It only became known days later, that the bleeding was due to the patient's partial dentures becoming lodged in her throat and cutting her throat. Because of the serious blood loss, the patient went into shock," Holub said in a prepared statement.

During a four-day trial, Holub argued that St. Mary's medical staff failed to check the mother of two for dentures. And, despite many opportunities, he said the hospital nurses failed to locate and remove the partial dentures.

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