Family hopes investigation pinpoints the cause of young doctor's death

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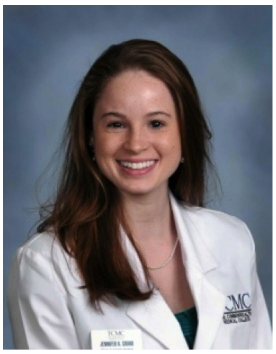

WEST PITTSTON - An attorney for the family of Jennifer Sidari, the newly minted doctor from West Pittston who unexpectedly died May 29, says he has assembled a world-class team of medical experts to determine what led to her death.

Standing in the front yard of the Sidari family home, attorney Matt Casey of Philadelphia pledged to launch a thorough investigation to learn the cause of the 26-year-old's death and examine whether she received proper hospital care.

Sidari, who graduated from The Commonwealth Medical College in Scranton on May 11, died from an unknown medical condition several days after reporting to the hospital May 26 for a complaint of headaches.

"This investigation will get to the bottom of what happened to her," Casey vowed, flanked by Sidari's father, Peter, and former Luzerne County District Attorney Bob Gillespie, a family friend who now specializes in personal injury law. "I have assembled a world-class team of medical experts."

Casey said no conclusions have been reached and no litigation has started, but "no stone will be left unturned" along the way.

"If the investigation determines that there were deviations from the professional standard of care in Dr. Sidari's case, however, we will demand accountability by bringing the full weight and authority of the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to bear on these issues. I've made that promise to this heartbroken family," said Casey, son of former Gov. Robert P. Casey and brother of Sen. Bob Casey.

Family members have previously said Sidari went to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township on May 26 due to headaches. Doctors spotted something that required her to be admitted, but the family said they were given no indication it was serious. Her condition rapidly deteriorated on Tuesday, May 28, and she was transferred to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, where she was about to begin her residency in pediatrics at the Janet Weis Children's Hospital. Sidari died hours later, surrounded by family.

Following Casey's announcement, Geisinger Health System released a statement that indicated an internal review was underway.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of Jennifer Sidari and wish to express heartfelt sympathy to her parents and family. We know Jennifer was a promising young doctor who was passionate about caring for others. We are especially saddened by her passing because she was going to begin her residency at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville," the statement said. "Consistent with our commitment to quality and continuous improvement, we review all such cases and such a review is currently underway."

Sidari was a 2005 graduate of Wyoming Area High School and graduated summa cum laude from the University of Scranton with dual degrees in biology and philosophy. With many options around the country for medical school, she chose to stay local and become a member of the inaugural graduating class of The Commonwealth Medical College.

"This young woman was a shooting star, Casey said. "And in her name, those who loved her are determined to figure out why she's no longer with us. We're not going to let them down."

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