

# The New York Times

## ***Hospital Settles Suit Over Infection That Killed Premies***

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A major Pennsylvania hospital where three premature infants died in a bacterial outbreak last year has taken the extraordinary step of admitting fault as a condition of a civil settlement announced Wednesday.

Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania, acknowledged the process it was using to prepare donor breast milk led to the deadly outbreak in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit. The Pennsylvania Health Department previously ordered Geisinger to correct several deficiencies, determining the hospital's systemic failure to prevent infection in its most vulnerable patients constituted "immediate jeopardy."

A civil suit filed by some of the families was settled, Geisinger and the plaintiffs' attorney said Wednesday. Monetary terms were not disclosed.

"The loss of a child is tragic, and this settlement can never replace these young children, however we believe we have taken the steps necessary to prevent future infections and spare other families from this loss," Dr. Jaewon Ryu, Geisinger's president and CEO, said in a written statement.

A total of eight premature infants at Geisinger tested positive for the *Pseudomonas* bacterium between July 1 and Sept. 29, 2019, according to an earlier health department report. Subsequent investigation found *Pseudomonas* in a cylinder used to prepare donor breast milk, on a brush used to clean the cylinder, and in breast milk that had been given to an infant who died Sept. 30, the report said.

*Pseudomonas* bacteria are common and often harmless but can pose a health risk in fragile patients.

Attorney Matt Casey, who represented the families of two of the infants who died and a third who suffered serious brain injury, said Wednesday his clients insisted that Geisinger take full legal acceptance of responsibility as a condition of the settlement.

He said Geisinger agreed — something he said he's never before seen in a civil settlement in over two decades of medical malpractice work.

“Geisinger has taken this extremely seriously in their dealings with me on behalf of my clients,” Casey said in a phone interview. “They’ve taken unprecedented steps as a consequence of litigation to accept responsibility, not for simply the infections occurring, but for them being the legal cause of these two deaths and those injuries.”

Geisinger operates a large regional health network with about 32,000 employees and 13 hospitals.