Geisinger facing another malpractice lawsuit over a deadly blood clot

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WILKES-BARRE — Mere weeks after Geisinger Health System settled a high-stakes lawsuit over a promising young doctor's death, it is preparing to defend itself against another malpractice lawsuit alleging its doctors failed to properly treat another deadly blood clot.

The facts are strikingly similar to the death of Jessica Gensel, a 26-year-old Salem Township mother of two who died of brain hemorrhaging April 1, 2013. The medical malpractice trial over her death is set to begin April 4, less than a month after parties settled mid-trial over Dr. Jennifer Sidari's death.

Earlier this month, the health system reached an undisclosed settlement with the family of Sidari, a 26-year-old doctor who planned to work for the health system before she died of brain hemorrhaging in its care on May 29, 2013.

Plaintiffs' attorney Matt Casey, of the Philadelphia law firm Ross Feller Casey, argued doctors were too slow to recognize signs of a blood clot in her brain and were too slow to respond when her condition worsened.

Casey said Monday that the settlement agreement prevented him from discussing Sidari's case, but that Gensel's death was a tragedy that could have been prevented.

"Jessica Gensel died tragically due to a blood clot in her brain that was neither timely diagnosed nor properly treated when it was diagnosed," Casey said. "She leaves two small children and a heartbroken family that missed her every day. While Jessica wasn't a doctor herself, she nevertheless was the only mother that her two children ever had or ever will have, and they miss her."

A spokesman for Geisinger said he could not immediately comment Monday.

According to the complaint, Gensel went to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center's emergency department the morning of March 22, 2013, complaining of throbbing headaches. She was discharged a little more than an hour later, without having a neurological exam, the suit says.

Days later, Gensel reported to the emergency room of Berwick Hospital, and was rushed to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. After a three-day stay, she was released despite the fact she still complained of throbbing headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, weakness, ringing in her ears, lack of feeling in her limbs, tremors and difficulty in balancing, according to the lawsuit.

She was advised to continue outpatient treatment, which did not include consultation with any Geisinger doctors, but only case managers and pharmacists, the suit says.

Gensel was rushed back to Geisinger Medical Center on April 1, and died later that day after suffering irreversible brain damage, the suit says.

Geisinger officials have previously sought to portray the cases as unrelated, arguing Gensel had a genetic mutation blood clotting disorder that increased her chances of blood clotting, whereas Sidari's case involved issues treated at other hospitals prior to her admission to the Plains Township campus.

Casey has called that characterization "shocking," noting that two women of the same age and same diagnosis died of the same thing at the same hospital a short time after doctors decided the situation wasn't dire.