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Jury Awards \$8 Million In Wrongful Death Lawsuit Against Former Tolland Physician

By Kelly Glista

WATERBURY — A jury returned an \$8 million verdict this week against a former Tolland physician and his employers after they were found liable for the death of a Vernon man who killed his wife and then himself in 2009.

James Morrin shot himself in the head after killing his wife, Alice, in June 2009. Attorneys for his estate filed a wrongful death lawsuit, claiming that the murder-suicide was the result of "carelessness and negligence" on the part of Morrin's physician, Carl Koplín.

The jury found Koplín liable for Morrín's suicide in December, and on Monday awarded \$8,008,500 in damages to Morrín's estate, said Josh Koskoff, the attorney representing Morrín's family.

Although Koplín was technically found liable only for Morrín's suicide, Koskoff said the murder-suicide was "an indivisible act."

According to the complaint, which names as defendants Koplín and three medical groups that employed him, Koplín failed "to exercise that degree of care and skill ordinarily and customarily used by physicians specializing in family practice medicine." The complaint outlines several examples, including Koplín's alleged failure to properly evaluate Morrín's mental state and recognize suicidal tendencies.

The complaint also alleges that Koplín did not perform a careful psychiatric or psychological evaluation, and failed to refer Morrín to a psychiatrist or psychologist for his "serious psychiatric condition."

According to state records, Koplín voluntarily surrendered his medical licence in November 2012.

Koplín's attorney, James Rosenblum, filed a motion to put aside the verdict in December, claiming that the court allowed "speculative and severely prejudicial evidence" to be presented to the jury.

After the damages verdict was handed up, Rosenblum said he could not comment on the specifics of his motion but said there would be more to come.

The motion details 12 "fundamental errors" that "infected the admission of evidence during the trial," including allowing a psychiatrist from Boston to testify that murder-suicide is a single event. The court had previously ruled that the murder was irrelevant to the plaintiff's claims and could not be blamed on the defendants, and this testimony, the motion claims, implied that "if the defendants negligently caused the suicide, they also caused the murder."

A judge has not yet ruled on the motion.

Koskoff said he is not concerned about the appeal. "The jury made the decision based on the better evidence," he said.

The Morrins were found dead inside their Vernon home on June 29, 2009. Alice Morrin, 43, had filed for divorce from James Morrin, 45, on April 13 that year at Superior Court in Rockville. They had two daughters.

Alice Morrin had worked for about three years as a news assignment editor at FOX CT before beginning a new job as executive assistant to Richard Graziano, then-publisher of The Courant and general manager of WTIC-TV and WTXN-TV, about a week before her death.