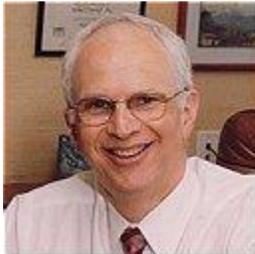


## **Koskoff Crew Handling Med-mal Aspects Of Michael Jackson Family Lawsuit**

BY KAREN ALI

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Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder's Michael P. Koskoff

The trial is in Los Angeles, and it promises to be a star-studded affair.

The family of Michael Jackson is suing a promoter over a series of lucrative London concerts that never happened, because the pop star died in 2009. Potential witnesses include Oprah Winfrey, Motown diva Diana Ross, legendary music producer Quincy Jones and Jackson's family, including his mother, Katherine, and siblings who all had a significant amount of pop music success — Janet, Jermaine and Randy.

And here's a little extra spice: "It's in the same courthouse as the O. J. trial," said Bridgeport attorney Michael Koskoff. "It's going to be a very interesting trial."

Koskoff is not simply an interested party observing from 3,000 miles away. He's in L.A. working with three of his firm's attorneys, Bill Bloss, Alinor Sterling and Carey Reilly. They're part of a plaintiff's legal team that is going to argue that the concert promoter, AEG Live Inc., was negligent in its hiring and supervising of Dr. Conrad Murray, who was supposed to be caring for Jackson, but instead administered a fatal dose of the surgical anesthetic Propofol.

It's the medical aspect of the case that's brought Koskoff and his crew to California. Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder focuses on medical malpractice cases. Koskoff said he was contacted by Brian Panish, an attorney with close ties to the Jackson family.

"I know Brian and he's a great personal injury lawyer, and since there are aspects that relate to medical malpractice, they asked us to join them," Koskoff said.

Koskoff declined to speak in detail about the information he might try to get from witnesses, saying, "I don't think it's appropriate to comment on the evidence at this stage."

However, it appears that the Bridgeport team might get substantial time in front of the jury. After all, there are 16 medical witnesses slated to testify on behalf of the Jackson family. There are 12 additional medical witnesses that the defense expects to call. Two of the witnesses — a psychiatrist and an addiction specialist — are from Connecticut. Other witnesses include cardiologists, pathologists, anesthesiologists, and pain management specialists.

Also on the list is Murray, the doctor who was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2011 and is serving a four-year term for administering the drugs that killed Jackson. Prosecutors at his trial said that he used the surgical anesthetic propofol to put him to sleep in "a reckless, obscene manner."

On April 23, the parties finished choosing the jury. Opening statements are slated to begin April 29. Koskoff expects the trial to last two to three months.

Already, Koskoff has noticed some differences between the courts in Connecticut and California. For one thing he said, the cases move much more quickly in California. Michael Jackson died June 25, 2009, and the lawsuit was filed a year-and-a-half later. "And it's already up for trial," Koskoff said.

Connecticut typically has a jury of six people hear civil cases. In the Jackson case, the parties have chosen 12 jurors and six alternates. At least 10 of the 12 must agree on a verdict. Even though there are more jurors, Koskoff said jury selection moved faster in California, he said.

In California, 18 potential jurors are questioned at a time. "We don't have that in Connecticut," said Koskoff, which has individual voir dire, in which prospective jurors are questioned individually.

There are problems with California's system of box voir dire, Koskoff said. But one benefit, he said, is that the attorneys can observe the interplay between prospective jurors.

He said that in this case, each juror was given a very extensive form to fill out and that helped to move the selection process along. That contrasts with Connecticut, where jurors are asked to fill out a simple form.

Koskoff said that there were originally four counts against the promoter. The judge granted summary judgment on three, but kept one, the one that claimed that AEG Live Inc., was negligent in hiring, supervising and retaining Dr. Murray.

Koskoff said that the plaintiffs' team is facing off against a defense team from O'Melveny & Myers, a firm with offices around the world. O'Melveny has about 50 or so lawyers working on the case. Koskoff isn't worried about being outnumbered.

"The thing that has always astounded me is when you get to the courtroom, it all levels out," Koskoff said. "It's a great thing about the system." •