

# Drug use scandal exposes hospitals

## Associated Press

LUBBOCK, Texas — One tragically misplaced epidural anesthetic shot could force a Lubbock hospital to take the lead on an issue that haunts physicians and every other American profession — drug abuse.

When South Park Hospital and Dr. Jack Dunn III agreed to a \$10.5 million settlement with the family of the late Margo Glickman Johnson earlier this month, industry experts say the medical profession paid heed.

The defendants never admitted to the claim by Johnson's family that Dunn was drug-impaired during the procedure and the hospital should have known it. However, the hospital did agree to pursue some drastic policy changes.

South Park pledged to try and persuade its medical staff to change the institution's bylaws to include the implementation of drug testing and mandatory educational programs.

"The significance nationally of the Lubbock case is that it will raise the issue in every hospital in America," said Rick Wade, spokesman for the American Hospital Association. It's going to have the potential for a lot of hospitals and medical staffs to say, 'Wait a minute. How is it we assure the public that every doctor practicing inside institutions is fully competent?'"

Clint Matthews, South Park's chief executive officer, was quick

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## Who to call

► **The Texas Medical Association** has a 24-hour hot line for anyone to call regarding a doctors' suspected drug or alcohol abuse. The number is (800) 880-1640.

► **The Texas State Board of Medical Examiners** accepts written complaints only. To request a form from their investigations department, call (512) 305-7100.

► **Doctors who know** of drug abuse by colleagues are required by law to make a report to the state board.

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to add that he can't coerce doctors to change their rules. It's too early to tell what changes, if any the suit will force in hospital drug policy, he said.

Pre-employment drug testing is a rarity nationwide for physicians to gain privileges at hospitals, Wade said.

"We do not know of a hospital in America that's been able to convince its medical staff to do that," Wade said.

Jake Glickman, Johnson's father, sued Dunn, South Park and others after the 20-year-old woman died as she prepared to deliver a baby July 4, 1995. Dunn erroneously injected a powerful anesthetic directly into a major vein.

Her undelivered baby died too "(Glickman) made a promise on the day his daughter died to do something about what had happened," said Richard Mithoff, Glickman's lawyer. "We recovered the maximum amount of money under the law, but what was primary was getting something done about this (impaired physicians)."

The hospital admitted no liability in the settlement. Dunn did not pay to renew his license, the State Board of Medical Examiners said.

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