

# Jury finds doc was negligent in tot's death

Family wins \$1.9 million verdict after 1-year-old dies of complications from rare heart ailment

By **SARAH MOORE**  
THE ENTERPRISE

BEAUMONT — A family won a \$1.9 million award Thursday in a lawsuit against an Orange doctor who was found negligent in a toddler's death.

Dr. Leonides Medrano cried upon hearing a verdict assigning her 85 percent of the blame in Christopher Woods' death, trial witnesses said.

The parents, Eugene and Falonda Woods, a military couple from Orange now stationed in Arkansas, took 1½-year-old Christopher Woods to Medrano for treatment when he had trouble breathing Nov. 5, 2001, according to court documents.

Medrano diagnosed him with pneumonia and asthma, treated him for two hours in her office and then checked

him into Hermann Memorial Baptist Orange Hospital at 10:49 a.m. that day.

According to nurses' testimony, when the child's condition deteriorated about noon, the parents placed several calls to Medrano.

Medrano didn't come to the hospital until 4:45 p.m. She recognized the child needed a higher level of care than she could provide about 5:15 p.m. and checked him into Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital, according to her attorney, Jim Boston.

Christopher Woods died of complications from viral myocarditis, a rare heart disease, about three hours later, according to an autopsy report presented as evidence.

"A doctor has an independent duty to know what's going on with her patient, period," plaintiff's attorney Sherie

Beckman said during closing arguments. "A problem may be more serious than nurses realize, especially when a child has breathing problems, because those can take a turn for the worse very quickly."

Boston said during closing arguments that according to experts' testimony, Christopher Woods' symptoms were not typical of viral myocarditis and there was no way Medrano could have been expected to diagnose it.

"This is the way it is, because Christopher Woods was behaving the way any child with a respiratory ailment would and no one could have known that underneath the symptoms seethed an insidious disease," Boston said.

Boston further disputed that Medrano received multiple calls between 4 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., when the child's symptoms worsened, as hospital records showed. He said in the heat of the moment, calls were documented incorrectly.

"Dr. Medrano is not the kind of person who would ignore repeated calls for help," Boston said.

Plaintiffs' attorneys Beckham and B. Adam Terrell said the \$1.9 million verdict showed that the jury system works.

Boston did not return a call for comment Thursday afternoon.

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