Docs Allegedly Failed to Test a Man for HIV; Now a Jury Has Awarded Him $18.4M

Sean Stentiford's HIV wasn't diagnosed until it had progressed to AIDS and caused brain damage.

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A Boston jury awarded Sean Stentiford $18.4 million in damages in a medical malpractice lawsuit alleging that his primary care physican Stephen E. Southard and neurologist Kinan K. Hreib failed to give him an HIV test in 2007 after he consented to have one. About three years later, an HIV test showed not only that Stentiford had HIV but also that it had progressed to AIDS. As The Boston Globe reports, the disease caused brain damage that ended Stentiford's career as a lawyer.

Stentiford had gone to the doctors at Lahey Hospital & Medical Center in Burlington, Massachusetts, in 2007 because he was experiencing facial paralysis. While there, according to the Globe, a resident suggested that the symptoms could be related to HIV.

Stentiford signed a consent form to be tested for the virus—but, according to the lawsuit, Hreib canceled the test without telling Stentiford, and during a follow-up meeting, Southard reported that all the tests "looked good." In his medical records, Hreib had noted that there was no risk of HIV in Stentiford's case.

In fact, argued the lawyers, Stentiford was at higher risk for HIV because he is gay and had worked as a paramedic, which exposed him to bodily fluids.

Today, the Globe reports, Stentiford takes HIV meds and no longer has AIDS-related symptoms.

To learn the POZ Basics about HIV testing—including the different types of tests and when you should get tested—click here. And for an interactive lesson on HIV/AIDS, including testing, click here.

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