Lawsuit: Iraq War Vet With HIV Was Not Allowed in Aquatic Therapy Pool

July 1, 2016

With the help of AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, an Iraq war veteran is suing a physical therapy service after she was told she could not use an aquatic therapy pool because she has HIV.

The plaintiff is using the pseudonym Bonnie Jones to protect her identity, according to a press release by the AIDS Law Project.

Jones, 40, served two tours of duty in Iraq. She sought treatment at a facility in York, Pennsylvania, operated by Drayer Physical Therapy and owned by OSS Orthopaedic Hospital. Jones needs treatment because she experiences chronic spinal pain and has a limited range of motion, problems related to wearing her bulletproof vest for long periods of time.

When Jones showed up for her appointment, the physical therapist recommended aquatic treatment, but after reviewing Jones's medical history, the therapist said he needed to check whether Jones could go in the pool. When the therapist returned, he told Jones, "Because of your HIV/AIDS, you're not allowed to go in the pool. It's our policy." According to the press release, he made the statement in a gymnasium where about 25 people were using equipment. Other people in the gym allegedly heard the comment and stared at Jones.

Embarrassed, she finished the session but didn't return to the facility.

In addition to seeking compensation and punitive damages, the lawsuit requires that the hospital and therapy facility develop an antidiscrimination policy and teach their staff about HIV, including its transmission and the proper precautions needed.

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