

Seven Surgeries, Two Deaths... and Still Practicing

During a brief stint in 2011 as a heart surgeon at Meriter Hospital in Madison, Wis., Sean Yetman, MD, performed only seven surgeries.

Two of his patients died soon after the procedures, resulting in malpractice lawsuits against Yetman. Both cases were cited by the Wisconsin medical board as a part of a 2014 deal it worked out with Yetman that resulted in the surrender of his medical license.

Meriter had hired a consultant to review his cases and fired him.

After he was fired, Yetman was offered a job at a hospital in Boston and in August 2012 he obtained a license in Massachusetts. He already held a license in New York, one he had since 2009.

Thus, he continued practicing despite the problems in Wisconsin.

In the first case, Yetman performed a coronary bypass surgery on Nancy Glumske, a 61-year-old from Elroy, Wis., on July 20, 2011. She died less than a month later, on Aug. 15. A lawsuit filed by her family accused Yetman of botching the surgery and the repair of a heart valve.

“Dr. Yetman was clearly an incompetent and an unqualified surgeon who had serious general professional deficiencies,” Glumske’s family said in the 2016 lawsuit.

The court case recently was dismissed, with a judge saying it had not been filed in a timely manner. An attorney for Glumske’s surviving husband and her estate said the judge’s

decision will be appealed.

A day after Glumske died, Yetman performed a similar operation on Thomas Pliner, 77, of Waunakee, Wis. He had experienced shortness of breath and went in for cardiac tests at Meriter Hospital; Yetman said he needed to have a heart valve repaired and bypass surgery.

Within a week, he had the surgery. He suffered profuse bleeding and died the next day.

“My dad was a hard-working family man,” said Pliner’s daughter, Jodie Busch. “He was married to my mom for 51 years and continued to work as a security guard into his 70s.”

In giving up his Wisconsin license, Yetman agreed not to try to renew it.

But neither Massachusetts nor New York imposed any restrictions.

His Massachusetts license lapsed last year. His New York license is active and has no restrictions. Yetman now works at a varicose vein clinic in the New York City area. Not surprisingly, his bio there makes no mention of his time in Wisconsin.

Jeffrey Hammond, a spokesman for the New York Department of Health, said he could not confirm or deny any investigation of a physician unless there is a public action taken by the board.

In court records and other filings, Yetman denied he was negligent in his care of the two Wisconsin patients.

One of the deaths was “completely a technical issue,” he told an investigator with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, according to a 2013 memo. The other “definitely could have come out different depending on who would have been there with (him).”

Yetman also said that while at Meriter he was “just starting out” and that other doctors with 20 to 25 years of experience didn’t take him under their wing, the memo said.

Yetman did not return calls made to the New York vein clinic.

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