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Hinsdale nursing home accused of negligence, overmedicating 74-year-old

By Bridget Doyle, TribLocal reporter



Courtesy of the Howorth family

Dolores Howorth poses with one of her grandchildren in 2009.



Family members are suing a nursing home, saying negligence and overmedicating caused the death of a 74-year-old woman less than a month after arriving at the Hinsdale facility.

In a lawsuit filed Wednesday, the family of Dolores Howorth claim the former Western Springs resident died of kidney failure caused by dehydration because Hinsdale's ManorCare Health Services chemically restrained her. The suit claims she was given medication that wasn't necessary to treat her dementia and also physically restrained her with a wheelchair lap restraint. The family seeks damages in excess of \$50,000 on each of the seven counts in the lawsuit.

When asked for comment Thursday, ManorCare representative Kelly Kessler said once the lawsuit is received, ManorCare plans to review and respond accordingly.

Howorth was admitted to ManorCare's Arcadia Dementia Unit on March 20, 2009, the suit states. Within 48 hours, she was prescribed Ativan, a sedative. Four days later she was prescribed Seroquel, an anti-psychotic. The lawsuit notes Howorth lost 16.1 pounds in her first 12 days at ManorCare.

Howorth was rushed from ManorCare to Hinsdale Hospital April 15, 2009, and was pronounced dead a few hours after admission. The Illinois Department of Public Health investigated and cited ManorCare for improper care, neglect and improper restraint of Howorth, according to documents provided by the firm representing the family.

"The Nursing Home Care Act as well as federal law has very strict guidelines of when

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chemical and physical restraints can be used in order to prevent nursing homes from using them for their own convenience as opposed to what’s best for the resident,” said Steven Levin of Levin and Perconti, a Chicago-based law firm representing Howorth’s family.

Howorth’s son, Hank Howorth said his family chose ManorCare because it seemed well-staffed, energetic and clean upon initial visits. However, shortly into her stay at the nursing home, Hank Howorth said his mother was exhausted all hours of the day. Sometimes, he said, she was even unresponsive.

“Right from the very beginning, we felt the medication was knocking her off too much,” Hank Howorth said. “I visited her every single day, and she would always be sleeping — often unrousable. When my wife and I sat in on physical therapy, we noticed the nurses would often have to manipulate her limbs.”

Hank Howorth said although he knows a lawsuit won’t bring his mother back, he and his family feel compelled to let others know of potential hazards at nursing facilities.

“This was the only way to get their attention so their professional practice changes,” Hank Howorth said. “Loved ones in nursing homes are trusted in the care of other people. We want to let others know they should investigate, ask a lot of questions and be aware when medications are prescribed.”

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Keywords

ManorCare Health Services, Levin and Perconti, Illinois Department of Public Health



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