

Lawsuit contends misdiagnosis contributed to death

By **DAVID C.L. BAUER, Journal-Courier** | Posted: Tuesday, April 30, 2013 6:00 am

A Bluffs man's lawsuit against Passavant Area Hospital and one of its doctors contends his wife died as a result of a misdiagnosed aortic dissection.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in Morgan County Circuit Court, contends Cynthia Rueter was experiencing chest pains and lightheadedness when she went to the Jacksonville hospital on Nov. 25, 2011.

Emergency room physician Shawn Fry diagnosed the woman as having a "vasovagal episode" — a usually harmless cause of lightheadedness — and discharged her. The next day, however, Cynthia Rueter, 39, was still complaining of chest pain and went to Illini Community Hospital in Pittsfield, according to the lawsuit. Emergency room staff transferred her to another facility, but she died on the way because of a build up of fluid in her heart resulting from the dissection, according to the complaint.

The lawsuit, which gives only one side of a case, seeks more than \$50,000. It contends Passavant's emergency room physician negligently failed to thoroughly evaluate Cynthia Rueter's condition and failed to diagnose the aortic dissection so she could receive the surgery she needed to repair it, according to attorney Steven M. Levin of Levin & Perconti in Chicago.

"My family took action to seek justice for my wife's death," James Rueter said. "She died needlessly and I hope to make others aware of her death because I do not want this to happen to anyone else's family."

A Passavant Area Hospital spokesman said the hospital does not comment on pending lawsuits.