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Updated 11/12: Winchester House pays \$1 million to family of Mundelein woman

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Lake County has agreed to pay \$1 million to settle a lawsuit with the family of an elderly Mundelein woman who died in January 2005 at Winchester House nursing home in Libertyville.

The seven-figure settlement to be paid to the family of Helen Menneke, an Alzheimer's patient who died at the Winchester House at age 83, is the largest settlement for a nursing home negligence case in Lake County, said Steven Levin, an attorney for the law firm of Levin & Perconti, which represented the family.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the woman's husband and three daughters, claimed the nursing home failed to take proper procedures to prevent her continuous falls, according to a press release from Levin & Perconti.

The suit claims that the woman had trouble walking because of her dementia, and despite her unsteadiness, never had a fall assessment completed by the nursing home's staff.

The suit also claims that the woman fell six times in eight months and the nursing home failed to take appropriate measures. Finally, the home implemented wheelchair and bed alarms to notify staff when the woman was up, but those alarms did not operate properly. The woman fell two more times, causing her to suffer brain injuries and hip and elbow fractures, and eventually died from her injuries, the suit claims.

Levin said he believes the settlement was fair and the nursing home has agreed to put in place "procedures that will hopefully prevent something like this from happening in the future."

"It's a record settlement and the family received fair and reasonable compensation but what's equally important is the facility agreed to change its policies to regularly check its (wheelchair and bed) alarms to make sure they're in working order," Levin said.

"Our clients brought this lawsuit, in part, so that other residents didn't have to suffer as their mother did," he said.

Winchester House officials and attorneys representing the county could not be reached for comment.



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