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# Paralyzed woman wins malpractice suit

## GARY: \$16 million awarded likely to be reduced

BILL DOLAN  
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CROWN POINT | A judge awarded \$16 million Tuesday to a former Gary woman whose lawyer said mistreatment of her back pain by two physicians has left her legs paralyzed.

Kenneth J. Allen, a Valparaiso trial lawyer, said he thinks \$16 million is a record sum for Indiana medical malpractice cases, but his 48-year-old client Karen DeHart will only receive a fraction of that amount because Indiana's medical malpractice law imposes a cap on such awards.

"There is no amount of money in the world that is going to replace what Karen DeHart has lost. While she is thankful to have the case over with, her problems are lifelong," Allen said.

Neither of the physicians, Dr. Venustiano Borromeo and Dr. K.V. Pillay, nor their attorney Matthew W. Conner of Indianapolis, could be reached Tuesday afternoon for comment.

Allen said DeHart first saw Borromeo in October 1995 at the Prompt Medical Care clinic in Merrillville for low back pain and Borromeo diagnosed her condition as a back sprain and prescribed pain medicine and bed rest.

Allen said DeHart saw Borromeo for back pain 21 times over the next five months, but the doctor only prescribed more medicine and physical therapy and failed to order any diagnostic studies.

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He said his client's legs became so weak she went to the emergency room of Methodist Hospital, where the staff discovered a tumor growing on Karen's spinal cord that was crushing healthy tissue.

Allen said Pillay, a neurosurgeon, operated to remove the tumor, but negligently removed a portion of her spinal cord, permanently leaving her a paraplegic.

DeHart now lives in a nursing home in Indianapolis, Allen said.



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