

Jackson County

Boyfriend of deceased woman sues doctor for wrongful death

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RIPLEY - A Jackson County man believes his girlfriend's death was a result of her physician mistaking the likely formation of blood clots as heartburn.

Anthony Nichols of Ripley as the administrator of the estate of Amy Sickler, filed a lawsuit against Dr. Craig S. Swann in Jackson Circuit Court on Feb. 18. In his complaint, filed with the assistance of Charleston attorney Robert V. Berthold Jr., Nichols, 38, alleges that Swann, 49, a osteopath with his own practice in Ripley, failed to timely detect inflammation of her veins and the presence of blood clots which resulted in her death two years ago.

According to court records, Sickler, who was 24 at the time, was a regular patient of Swann's throughout 2006. Though records are unspecific as to when, Sickler come to Swann "with symptoms and complaints consistent with thromboembolic disorder."

Thromboembolic disorder is a group of disorders characterized by inflammation of the veins and formation of blood clots, or thrombus. In his suit, Nichols alleges Swann "improperly diagnosed [the symptoms as] acute sinusitis, GERD and atypical chest pain."

Commonly known as acid reflux, or heartburn, GERD is an acronym for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease. Nichols' suit does not state what, if anything, Swann prescribed Sickler following his diagnosis.

However, he avers that "On Jan. 5, 2007, [she] suffered a pulmonary embolism and died." In addition to himself, Nichols maintains Sickler "was found lying her driveway by...her two children, Lauren Nichols and Mandy Sickler."

According to her death certificate, Sickler's immediate cause of death was a thromboembolic pulmonary with a deep vein leg thrombosis as a secondary cause. At the time of her death, Sicker, a native of Texas, was 25 and living with Nichols in Ripley.

As a result of Sickler's death, Nichols alleges he has incurred funeral and burial expenses, medical bills. Also, Nichols has not only suffered a loss of earning capacity, but also the "companionship, attention, protection, advice [and] guidance" of Sickler.

He is seeking unspecified damages.

The case has been assigned to Judge David W. Nibert.

Jackson Circuit Court case number: 09-C-17