

Texas Hospital Reaches Settlement With Nurse Infected With Ebola

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A nurse who contracted the Ebola virus while treating the first person diagnosed with the deadly disease in the United States has reached a settlement with the Dallas hospital where she was in a team caring for the man, a statement on Monday said.

Terms of the deal between the hospital's owner, Texas Health Resources, and nurse Nina Pham, the first person infected with Ebola in the United States, were not disclosed.

Pham sued last year, saying that Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital did not do enough to prevent her from contracting the deadly virus and invaded her privacy after she was diagnosed with it.

"Texas Health Resources (THR) and Ms. Pham have resolved the pending lawsuit, and wish the best for each other going forward," they said in a joint statement. They did not provide further details.

In the lawsuit, which was filed in Dallas County, Pham claimed the hospital did not initially provide nurses with proper protective equipment or properly train staff on how to treat the disease.

The lawsuit accused the hospital of negligence and deception. It did not specify an amount in damages.

The hospital has denied the claims.

Pham was one of two nurses at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital who contracted the disease when treating Thomas Duncan, who was admitted in September 2014 and died less than two weeks later.

Both nurses recovered. Duncan contracted the disease in Liberia.

Pham, who was 26 then, became a national symbol of hope in fighting Ebola after she recovered and was greeted in the Oval Office by President Barack Obama.

Pham claimed the hospital used her as a "public relations pawn" to improve its plummeting image. While it issued news releases saying her condition had improved to "good," it was having end-of-life conversations with her, Pham alleged in her lawsuit.

Pham said the hospital did not respect her right to privacy. In one instance, she was videotaped speaking to a doctor, and the video was released to the media. Pham said both the taping and the release of the videotape occurred without her permission.

The hospital did not disclose details of Pham's employment status, but the Dallas Morning News has reported that she was kept on the payroll even though she did not return to work.

In an interview with the newspaper last year, Pham said she has suffered hair loss, physical pain, insomnia and nightmares since recovering from Ebola.

(Reporting by Jon Herskovitz; Editing by Jonathan Oatis)

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<https://www.yahoo.com/news/nurse-survived-ebola-settles-texas-hospital-system-173517667.html>

DALLAS (AP) — A nurse who contracted Ebola two years ago while caring for the first person to be diagnosed in the U.S. with the deadly disease settled a lawsuit Monday against the parent company of the Dallas hospital where she worked.

Attorneys for Nina Pham announced the settlement with Texas Health Resources. They and the company said in a joint statement that terms will not be disclosed.

The statement said Pham and the company "wish the best for each other going forward."

Pham contracted Ebola in the fall of 2014 while caring for Thomas Eric Duncan at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas. Duncan, who contracted Ebola in his native Liberia and became ill during a trip to the U.S., died. Pham, at the time an intensive care unit nurse, and another Dallas nurse who contracted Ebola survived.

In her lawsuit against the hospital's parent company, Pham said that the "sum total" of information she was given to protect herself after being told she would be treating a patient suspected of having Ebola was "what her manager 'Googled' and printed out from the Internet." She said that the day after she got that information, the patient tested positive for the disease.

The lawsuit called Pham "a casualty of a hospital system's failure to prepare for a known and impending medical crisis."

It described a chaotic situation at the hospital, in which nurses scrambled to decide what kind of personal protective equipment to wear "without any formal guidance or training" from their supervisors.

Clear drop cloths were taped to the ceiling and walls of the hallway to create a makeshift containment facility, nurses had to dispose of hazardous waste, which they weren't trained to do, and hazardous material placed in the room next to Duncan's was allowed to pile up, the lawsuit alleged.

On the first day Pham treated Duncan, when Ebola was suspected but not yet diagnosed, she wore a regular isolation gown, double gloves, a surgical mask with a plastic shield and double booties. The lawsuit said her hair and neck were exposed and that she wasn't given a change of clothes to wear home, so she went home in the scrubs she wore while treating Duncan.

After his diagnosis, nurses put on hazmat suits with double gloves and added "chemo gloves" and taped them to the suit. They also added a personal respirator they covered with a gown. These decisions, the lawsuit said, were made without any formal guidance or training by supervisors.

The lawsuit said that after Duncan died, Pham was told that what she had worn was safe and that she had no risk of contracting Ebola. Confident in what hospital officials had told her, she spent time with friends and family. The lawsuit said that she began feeling ill two days after Duncan died. The next day, she drove herself to the hospital and was diagnosed with Ebola.

In a response to the lawsuit, the hospital operator denied allegations of poor training and improper preparation.

An independent review released in September 2015 found the hospital wasn't adequately prepared for a patient who had Ebola and stumbled because of communication failures. The report led by a former chief executive of the Mayo Clinic found communications at the hospital were inconsistent, such as when Duncan's travel history gathered by a nurse wasn't verbally communicated to a doctor.

The report also faulted the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which it said failed to prepare the hospital in the use of personal protective equipment, waste management and "other challenges."

Pham eventually was transferred to the National Institutes of Health in Maryland for treatment and recovered.

The lawsuit said, though, that she worried about her long-term health and doubted she'd ever return to being a critical care nurse again because of the stress and anxiety of the trauma she experienced and the "fear and stigma" that follow her.

After her recovery, Pham continued to be a hospital employee but didn't return to work. Her employment status following the settlement of the lawsuit was unclear. The two parties said in their statement announcing the settlement that they would not be making additional statements. When contacted, they declined to give further information, including about Pham's employment status.