

## Mid-Columbia Medical Center ordered to pay \$2.4M over sex abuse, rape of patients

**The Associated Press** By **The Associated Press**

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on October 22, 2013 at 10:07 PM, updated October 22, 2013 at 10:13 PM

THE DALLES, Ore. — Jurors on Tuesday ordered a Columbia Gorge hospital to pay \$2.4 million in compensatory damages to three victims of an anesthesiologist now serving a 23-year sentence for sex abuse and rape.

One woman was awarded \$700,000, a second was awarded \$800,000 and jurors said a third plaintiff should get \$900,000, The Dalles Chronicle reported. The women had sought \$6 million each.

The jury returned its verdict Tuesday evening after beginning deliberations earlier in the day. The trial began Oct. 1.

The lawsuit alleged that Mid-Columbia Medical Center and two executives didn't take action that could have prevented the sex abuse. Jurors found that the hospital should pay all the damages.

Andrew Efaw, a lawyer for the hospital, said Tuesday night that no decision on a possible appeal had yet been made.

Dr. Frederick Field was sentenced in September 2012 for molesting sedated women. He had pleaded guilty to 11 counts of sex abuse and one count of rape.

The abuse occurred from 2007 to 2011.

The suit alleged the hospital failed to act on allegations in 2008 and that allowed Field to prey on victims for three more years.

A dozen women reported abuse. Ten have sought compensation. The hospital reports two have agreed to settlements, whose terms were not disclosed. Trials in the cases of five more victims are planned later.

Lawyers for the three plaintiffs in this trial said the hospital had enough information to act against Field before he was arrested, including additional complaints from hospital staff members that Field had fondled them and been warned about it.

The hospital's lawyers said the hospital couldn't act earlier: A victim who phoned in a complaint in 2008 didn't respond to requests for more information, and a second woman who lodged a complaint in 2011 recanted.

When another victim came forward later in 2011, law enforcement authorities asked the hospital not to tell Field he was under investigation.

A lawyer for the women, Mark McDougal, said that the complaints of patients of abuse under sedation and the harassment of staff members were pieces of a puzzle that, taken together, would have been enough for the hospital to keep out a sexual predator.

-- The Associated Press