

Kohala doctor faces suit | Hawaii Tribune Herald

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Stephens Media

The children of a retired NFL player are suing a North Kohala doctor, claiming the doctor's actions led to their father's death.

William "Billy" Parks, 61, died in 2009 of metastatic melanoma in his liver, two years after Dr. Robert Watkins removed a suspicious mole from Parks' back, according to the lawsuit filed last month in the U.S. District Court.

Parks' children, Bogart "Bo" Mumford Parks and Chiya Nichole Parks, sued seeking unspecified monetary damages. They allege Watkins was negligent and his actions constituted medical malpractice. Hamakua Health Center, doing business as Kohala Family Health Center, was also named in the lawsuit, because William Parks believed Watkins was working with the health center.

"We're just trying to do this so hopefully no one else has to go through this," Bo Parks said last week.

According to the lawsuit, Watkins reportedly told Bo Parks and William Parks' wife, Rebecca, in July 2009 he felt responsible for William Parks' death. Watkins also told Bo Parks he hadn't sent the suspicious mole to be biopsied because of the cost, the lawsuit claims. William Parks wasn't diagnosed with melanoma until June 2009.

Bo Parks said he was astonished by Watkins' comments.

"He admitted several times he was wrong," Bo Parks said, adding he also felt "a lot of anger."

William Parks played for the Dallas Cowboys, the San Diego Chargers and the Houston Oilers, Bo Parks said.

Watkins and an attorney for the Hamakua Health Center did not respond to requests for comment.

The state's Medical Claims Conciliation Panel ruled in January that some of Watkins' actions, and inaction, constituted negligence. Specifically, the ruling said, when Watkins did not fully inform William Parks on the advisability of a biopsy before performing the removal, when Watkins did not order a biopsy or take "the necessary steps to ensure that meaningful laboratory findings were obtained," and when Watkins failed to keep medical records, "his medical care fell below the community standard of care."

The panel ruled Watkins was "actionably negligent."

Watkins and William Parks were friends, the lawsuit said, and Watkins had provided William Parks' medical care for 20 years.

"As part of their friendship, Dr. Watkins and Mr. Parks traded for their respective services to each other," the lawsuit said. "Mr. Parks, who was a skilled master carpenter, performed carpentry services for Dr. Watkins at little or no cost for his labor. In exchange for this, Dr. Watkins was supposed to provide Mr. Parks with complete medical care, the cost of which was to be funded out of Dr. Watkins' own pocket."

The lawsuit alleges Watkins and the health center failed to diagnose Parks, treat him, refer him to specialists and create proper medical records for him from June 2007 until his death. In June

2007, William Parks complained to Watkins about a "prominent, itchy mole" on his back. Watkins came to the Parks' home to examine the mole and removed it, "without first referring Mr. Parks to a dermatologist or other specialist," the lawsuit said.

Watkins chose not to have the mole biopsied, and did not create any medical record of the mole or its removal.

At the time, the Parks family believed Watkins was affiliated with Kohala Family Health Center, which was to maintain his medical records. Family members later learned Watkins never kept any medical records for William Parks, nor had he noted that William Parks was at high risk for cancer, based on a number of immediate relatives who had died of cancer.

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