

Sharps Container: Psych Patient Was Known To Steal Needles.

The patient had a long history of substance abuse, depression and hospitalization for psychiatric issues.

Her well-known prior medical history included incidents of having gotten into and removed used needles from the sharps disposal containers which are commonly found in hospital rooms.

She was found dead in her hospital room at 1:15 a.m. several days into an emergency hospitalization for diabetic ketoacidosis with a syringe containing an orange substance on the floor beside her.

The autopsy fixed the cause of death as foreign body granulomatous inflammation of the heart and lungs as commonly seen in deaths from intravenous narcotism.

The Superior Court of Connecticut ruled the family's lawsuit could go forward.

The lawsuit papers contained general allegations that the hospital's staff were negligent in failing to provide a psychiatric consult, failing to search her belongings to ensure that she had no items with which to harm herself, failing to conduct daily mental status assessments and failing to observe her adequately.

The lawsuit also alleged negligence for failing to address a special safety concern, her known propensity for removing discarded needles from the sharps containers. **Estate of Ramirez v. Eastern Connecticut Health, 2011 WL 1886510 (Conn. Super., April 20, 2011).**