



CECILE VIDA, who died in 2006, and her husband Vincent in an undated photo.

Malpractice trial begins against doc whose patient died

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Opening statements will be heard today in the medical malpractice suit against a doctor whose patient died five days after a lymph node biopsy was performed on her at the Bayonne Medical Center in 2006, officials said.

Jury selection finished at about noon yesterday in the wrongful death suit alleging negligence by Bayonne Dr. Margaret Engel in the death of Cecille Vida, 46, of Bayonne, who died on Dec. 5, 2006. Engel was Vida's primary doctor.

Opening statements are scheduled for 9 a.m. before Superior Court Judge Mary K. Costello.

The suit originally named six doctors as defendants. Before dismissing the jury at 12:15 p.m. yesterday, Costello told the four women and three men on the panel that five of the defendants had settled with the plaintiff and were no longer part of the case.

The judge told jurors they did not need to know the details of the settlements and the settlements had nothing to do with their role deliberating on the matter before them. The attorney for the defense and those for the plaintiff had no comment

yesterday.

The biopsy was performed Dec. 1, 2006 after Vida complained of shortness of breath and scans of her lungs revealed enlarged lymph nodes, according to previous statements by attorney Christian LoPiano who filed the lawsuit on behalf of Vida's husband, Vincent Vida. The widower attended jury selection yesterday.

Vida suffered from "severe pulmonary hypertension" or high blood pressure in the lungs and LoPiano contends the biopsy carried a high risk of death because of her condition.

The suit alleges the biopsy should not have been done without first pursuing low-risk tests and scans. During the procedure, Vida's oxygen level fell and she was on a ventilator until her death, court papers say.

In the past, Engel's attorney, Neil Reisman, has said that his client acted professionally and did not violate any standards of medicine, and that her role was superseded by the specialists involved. Engel sat at the defense table beside Reisman during jury selection yesterday.

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