

Woman awarded \$10M in civil suit

Blamed chiropractor for paralyzing stroke

By ROSANNE SIMBORSKI
Day Staff Writer

A former New London woman who had a paralyzing stroke in 1985 after her neck was manipulated was awarded \$10 million in damages Tuesday in her civil lawsuit against a Waterford chiropractor.

Lawyers in New London Superior Court said the judgment is the largest ever awarded by a civil jury in New London County.

Linda Jean Solsbury, 41, sued Thomas B. Goulding for malpractice after she suffered a stroke Oct. 25, 1985. Ms. Solsbury, represented by Eugene K. Swain of Suisman Shapiro Wool Brennan & Gray, claimed Goulding's manipulations of her cervical vertebrae caused damage that blocked the flow of blood to her brain and caused her stroke.

Goulding and his lawyer, Robert L. Hirtle Jr. of Hartford, had no comment. Hirtle said during the trial that too many variables were in play to know what caused the stroke.

The woman, who was a pediatric nurse at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, became a quadriplegic after the stroke. The jurors, instead of hearing verbal testimony from Ms. Solsbury last month, heard the tap, tap, tap of her right index finger on a keyboard attached to a computer that registered her testimony on monitors strategically placed in the courtroom.

Swain said the case was not one against all chiropractors.

"This was a single instance involving a certain part of the body," Swain said. "Part of Linda's desire to have this case heard was so that it wouldn't happen again."

Swain visited Ms. Solsbury at New Britain Memorial Hospital to tell her about the award. He said Ms. Solsbury said she was grateful that the jurors listened and un-

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derstood her case.

The case had sentimental value for Swain, who said he took it over after his partner James J. Courtney died in a Christmastime fire last year with three of his four children.

Before Tuesday's award, the next largest of \$1.5 million had been won in 1989 by Courtney on behalf of the widow of an Old Mystic man who was killed in a 1986 car crash.

Swain said Courtney had promised Ms. Solsbury to see her case through.

"This was Jim's case, and he had made a commitment to Linda that, regardless of what it would cost us to do this, she would get her day in court," Swain said. "It was Jim's commitment to her that typifies the lawyer that Jim was."

Swain said the law firm would not be seeking a share of the judgment for representation. The standard share for a firm is one-third.

He asked the jury last week to

consider awarding Ms. Solsbury \$20 million for lost earnings, medical expenses, future medical needs and the intangible damages of mental and physical pain and suffering.

Swain said he was pleased with the jury's award.

His next task, he said, is ultimately getting the \$10 million to Ms. Solsbury. Swain said he understands that Goulding, who had no malpractice insurance, plans to file for bankruptcy soon. Swain said he plans to take action to keep Goulding responsible for the \$10 million.