

WOMAN WINS \$10 million injury lawsuit

By STEVE MAGUIRE
Norwich Bulletin

NEW LONDON — A former New London woman who claims she was paralyzed by her chiropractor won a \$10 million jury verdict against him yesterday, but she may have trouble collecting because he is uninsured.

Linda Jean Solsbury, 41, who now lives at New Britain Memorial Hospital, brought the case against Dr. Thomas B. Goulding, who has offices in New London and East Lyme, because she said she wanted to send a message to chiropractors that manipulating cervical vertebra is dangerous.

Her lawyer, Eugene K. Swain of the New London firm Suisman, Shapiro, Wool, Brennan and Gray, said the case was brought to make good on a promise made to Mrs. Solsbury by his partner, the late James J. Courtney.

"It's a case where he promised her that regardless of what it cost us she would get her day in court," he said.

Mrs. Solsbury was paralyzed by a massive stroke on Oct. 25, 1985. She cannot speak, eat or control her bodily functions. The only muscles she still controls are in her right arm, allowing her to type on a computer keyboard. Her memory and her mental capacity were not damaged.

"What has happened to her is beyond description," Mr. Swain said, explaining why he had sought \$20 million for the woman. "But I am not at all disappointed by the amount of this verdict."

Mrs. Solsbury was a longtime patient of Dr. Goulding's, but began seeing him regularly for neck and shoulder pain earlier that October. She testified she visited his office on the day of her stroke and felt what her lawyer described as a tremor after the doctor manipulated her neck. Her pulse quickened, she broke into a sweat and she began hearing a buzzing sound, he

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said.

Mr. Swain said the manipulation damaged the left vertebral artery and disrupted the flow of blood to her brain.

Dr. Goulding claimed he had stopped manipulating her neck in mid-October after she complained of pain. His lawyer, Robert Hirtle of Hartford, argued that the case was an attack on chiropractors waged by the conventional medical profession.

"This case was not tried against chiropractors," Mr. Swain said after the verdict was announced. "This is a single instance that involved one particular part of the body."

He said the jury's request to rehear most of the crucial testimony during two days of deliberations shows it decided the case on the facts rather than sympathy for Mrs. Solsbury or a dislike for chiropractors.

"This jury absolutely understood what this case is about," Mr. Swain said.

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— Michael Koskoff
Lawyer

He said the verdict should also show professionals that they cannot escape responsibility for malpractice by not carrying insurance. He said he has attached Dr. Goulding's property and will fight any attempt to file bankruptcy.

"He has no insurance coverage," Mr. Swain said. "And from the beginning they have said that if there was a verdict he was going to file for bankruptcy and discharge this debt."

According to New London Superior Court Chief Clerk Jeffrey W. Feldman, the verdict is the largest in New London County history.

Although there is no official record, the verdict may be the second largest ever in the state, he said.

David N. Rosen of the New Haven law firm Rosen and Dolan said his \$10.68 million verdict in 1987 for a New London man who sued Southern New England Telephone Co. is the largest ever awarded in Connecticut.

He said his client, Damon Sable, a plumber's apprentice, was paralyzed when he fell down a flight of stairs while using a public telephone. Mr. Sable claimed that SNET put the phone in a dangerous spot.

Michael Koskoff of the Bridgeport law firm Koskoff, Koskoff and Bieder, worked with Mr. Rosen on the SNET case in U.S. District Court in New Haven.

Mr. Koskoff said verdicts of more than \$1 million are rare and that people who have won them keep tabs on the others. He said the next-largest verdict was \$9 million awarded to Stanley A. Jacobs, of Jacobs and Jacobs in New Haven.

"Even the poorest driver in Connecticut is forced to take out the barest insurance coverage," Mr. Koskoff said. "It is an abomination that professionals do not have to."