

Prescription Error Causes Devastating Injuries



Leah Strassman, age 61, had been suffering from a condition called hypothyroidism, and was being treated with a maintenance medication called Cytomel. The medication is a potent synthetic thyroid drug used to treat hypothyroidism, which is also sometimes referred to as “lazy thyroid.” The manufacturer of Cytomel produces the medication in tablets of 5, 25, and 50 micrograms. Unfortunately, in December 2002, Ms. Strassman’s treating endocrinologist signed a prescription for Ms. Strassman to take five milligrams of Cytomel, twice daily. The prescription was therefore written for one thousand times the correct dosage. Compounding the doctor’s error, the pharmacy filled the prescription as written and dispensed the drug to its patient without question.

Ms. Strassman took the erroneous dosage of Cytomel for six days before she suffered what is known as a “thyroid storm.” She experienced fevers reaching 108 degrees, slipped for a period of time into a coma, and had multiple

cardiac arrests. She relies upon a ventilator to breathe, she is partially paralyzed, and has permanent heart and brain damage.

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On Ms. Strassman’s behalf, attorney Elliot Hochman was contacted to investigate the mismanaged medication. In turn, Mr. Hochman referred the case to Harry Shevin at the Searcy Denney firm. Mr. Shevin filed a formal Notice of Intent upon the pharmacy, Schaefer Drugs, and the treating endocrinologist. Negotiations began immediately. Fortunately for Ms. Strassman, the pharmacy and the physician were well insured, and Mr. Shevin was able to collect the total available liability insurance limits of \$3.5 million for her. The money will be used to provide medical care and living assistance for Ms. Strassman, who remains ventilator dependent and in need of constant care.