



View this article online: <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/west/2021/06/08/617802.htm>

\$3.25M in Medical Malpractice Death of Washington Prisoner

The Washington state Department of Corrections has agreed to pay \$3.25 million to the family of a man who died at Monroe Correctional Complex after not receiving adequate medical care.

A lawsuit filed by Julia Kleutsch said her husband, John Kleutsch, 57, died of an abdominal wound that staff failed to properly treat, while offering him only Tylenol, The Seattle Times reported Wednesday.

The settlement filed Tuesday in King County Superior Court is the latest fallout from the tenure of former prison medical director Dr. Julia Barnett. Barnett, who was hired in 2017 without some qualifications, was fired in 2019 after an internal investigation found the medical care she provided and supervised contributed to the suffering and deaths of several men at the prison, including Kleutsch.

The lawsuit said Kleutsch was recovering from outpatient cancer surgery when he was sent to the prison infirmary to recover but failed to receive proper care. It says Kleutsch asked staff to help when his wound became puffy, oozing and tender and reported excruciating pain in the 26 days before his death.

The lawsuit alleges at least one nurse asked Barnett to transfer him to a hospital but she refused.

Kleutsch, who was serving a sentence for child molestation, died on Aug. 28, 2018, of septic shock, acute pancreatitis and a perforated intestine – conditions never diagnosed at the prison, according to the lawsuit.

"John was treated inhumanely and suffered terribly before he died," Julia Kleutsch said. "The Department told me nothing about Dr. Barnett failing to provide basic medical care to John or that it caused his death."

Marta O'Brien, an attorney for Julia Kleutsch, on Tuesday called the case "one of the worst medical malpractice cases I have encountered" and said it showed "a systemic failure" by the Department of Corrections.

"My heart goes out to Mrs. Kleutsch for her loss," Barnett said in a statement. "By its actions in replacing me with 3 physicians, DOC has acknowledged the unacceptable level of risk it placed solely on my shoulders. Systemically, the DOC chose to have too few providers, despite my and the inmates' begging for more."

As a result of the complaint, the Washington Medical Commission indefinitely suspended Barnett's medical license.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to the Kleutsch family for the pain they suffer over the loss of a loved one," said newly appointed Department of Corrections Secretary Cheryl Strange. "We know a settlement can never truly compensate for the pain of losing a family member and hope this resolution will bring some solace in the years to come."

Copyright 2021 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

More from Insurance Journal

[Today's Insurance Headlines](#) | [Most Popular](#) | [West News](#)