

Hospitals settle transplant suit

1-year-old died days after getting part of father's liver

By **TERRI LANGFORD**
Staff Writer

The family of a baby girl who died after receiving transplanted liver tissue of the wrong blood type settled their lawsuit against two Dallas hospitals Tuesday for an undisclosed amount.

The family of Jeanella Aranda sued Children's Medical Center and Baylor University Medical Center last year after staff members at both hospitals failed to double-check blood types of both the infant and the parents, resulting in the wrong parent being chosen as a donor.

The 1-year-old Longview girl died Aug. 2, 2002, 20 days after she received part of her father's liver. Jeanella was blood type O, like her mother, Alicia Aranda. Her father, Cesar Aranda, had blood type A.

The string of problems that led to the girl's death began when labels were mixed up after the parents had their blood drawn at Children's Medical Center, according to the lawsuit. Lab officials at Baylor and Children's failed to communicate in a way that would have revealed that Mr. Aranda's blood was not a match for his daughter, the family contended in its suit. Mr. Aranda's liver tissue, once extracted, was transferred to Children's

Medical Center, where Jeanella's transplant surgery was performed.

Baylor officials declined to answer questions about the case, choosing instead to issue a short statement.

"Mr. Aranda underwent an emergency surgery at Baylor University Medical Center to remove part of his liver to save the life of his child who required an emergency liver transplant at Children's Medical Center," the statement read. "Baylor University Medical Center was not involved in the child's transplant or ever involved in the care of the child."

Children's Medical Center acknowledged the settlement, in a statement, and noted that it had appointed a new medical chief of

its organ transplant program, as well as new policies and procedures "designed to improve every link of the quality control chain."

After the family filed the wrongful-death suit March 10, 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services placed Children's Medical Center on a 90-day track to have its Medicaid funding terminated, according to recent court filings and Children's Hospital officials.

But the hospital convinced federal and state officials that the new procedures, implemented as a result of the Aranda case, were sufficient, and Medicaid funding continued uninterrupted.

E-mail tlangford@dallasnews.com

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