

Patient sues over tainted blood

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Staff Writer

A 77-year-old Philadelphia woman who allegedly contracted a viral infection during a blood transfusion at Anne Arundel Medical Center is suing the hospital.

The lawsuit filed Monday in Circuit Court is the second in less than two months claiming that the hospital gave blood tainted with the Hepatitis-B virus to patients.

Henrietta J. Leonowicz has "chronic illness from her unrelenting, incurable condition," said her attorney, Marvin Ellin of Baltimore.

AAMC spokesman Martha Harlan said in a statement that the hospital follows "all federally mandated guidelines

pital on July 9 for treatment of an infection of her hip, according to the suit.

She went back to the hospital on an outpatient basis Aug. 5, when she received a blood transfusion. That blood was tainted by Hepatitis B, according to the lawsuit.

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that attacks the liver. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it can cause lifelong infection, scarring of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death.

"She started feeling poorly and very ill, and then finally lab studies reported elevated liver enzymes," often a symptom of Hepatitis B, Mr. Ellin said.

She was readmitted to AAMC Dec. 4 for severe abdominal

to ensure the highest degree of safety for our patients.

"Although the hospital cannot comment on any specific patient case, it is common knowledge and important to remember that despite extensive testing of blood donors for infectious diseases, Hepatitis B is still the most commonly transmitted infectious agent," she said. "This is the case with all donor collection sites. Approximately 1 in 60,000 units is possibly infectious despite having negative testing."

Ms. Leonowicz followed the advice of her niece and traveled to the Parole hospital to have surgery on her right hip on June 16 last year, Mr. Ellin said. She was discharged three days later, then returned to the hos-

pain and other medical problems related to her infection, the lawsuit says. On that date, hospital employees blamed Ms. Leonowicz's abnormal liver studies on the drug Zocor, according to the suit.

On Dec. 11, a notation was made on Ms. Leonowicz's hospital record by an emergency room physician that her enzymes were "Off the wall," according to the lawsuit.

After several visits with her personal physician, Ms. Leonowicz was diagnosed with Hepatitis B, Mr. Ellin said.

Ms. Leonowicz now lives with her niece in the county, according to Mr. Ellin, and is unable to take care of herself.

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