

# Suit seeks \$32 mil in woman's death

Negligence case 3rd against Ruxton in a year

By Amanda Kerr

WILLIAMSBURG — A \$32.8 million lawsuit has been filed against Ruxton Health of Williamsburg, now Envoy of Williamsburg, outlining the physical condition that led to the death of an 84-year-old resident of the nursing home.

The lawsuit was filed Friday at the Williamsburg-James City Courthouse on behalf of Bob Wiggins Jr. and the estate of Lorina Wiggins.

According to the lawsuit, when Lorina Wiggins was admitted to the nursing home in March 2007, she had one pressure sore on her lower back.

The lawsuit states that between August 2007 and February 2008, Wiggins developed seven new pressure sores. A blister on her left ankle originally diagnosed in December had grown to 13 centimeters by 7 centimeters by March 2008. The area had turned black from infection and was deep enough to expose the ankle bone.

“This wound became the proximate cause of Wiggins’ death,” the lawsuit claims.

According to the suit, Wiggins was taken to Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center on March 21, 2008, after her son, Bob Wiggins, became concerned about the physical condition of his mother.

Physicians at the hospital diagnosed Wiggins with several conditions, including sepsis from a large sore on her lower back that exposed her tailbone, and ulcers with gangrene, according to the lawsuit. Wiggins died a week later.

The lawsuit alleges that although the nursing home had identified Wiggins at high risk for developing pressure sores when she was admitted, it allegedly did not include an order to reposition her frequently until August. An order for an air mattress to further alleviate pressure was also not given until August.

The lawsuit stated that once the air mattress was installed, it was frequently found deflated because it was unplugged.

The lawsuit alleges that at no time was Bob Wiggins ever informed of his mother’s extensive pressure sores and was “consistently told ‘Mrs. Wiggins is doing fine, no problems.’”

The lawsuit names Ruxton Health of Williamsburg as well as its former administrator, Sue Myatt, as negligent in the care of Wiggins, specifically in failing to prevent an existing wound “from becoming worse, preventing new pressure areas from developing, and failing to provide adequate treatment.”

This is the third time in a year that a lawsuit has been filed against Ruxton Health of Williamsburg stemming from the death of a resident. All three lawsuits have been filed by Virginia Beach attorney John Zydron.

The first lawsuit was filed last November and involved the death of 97-year-old Lillian Funn, who died in March of 2008 after developing multiple bedsores and skin ulcers. That lawsuit was settled in April. Details of the settlement are sealed under a confidentiality agreement.

A second lawsuit was filed in August stemming from the 2007 death of 70-year-old Roper Houston. The lawsuit alleges he died after falling at the nursing home and sustaining a head injury.

Wiggins’ death was originally investigated by Williamsburg Police and the Williamsburg-James City Commonwealth Attorney’s Office, but no criminal charges were ever filed.