Most Lawsuits in Exeter Hospital Hepatitis C Outbreak Settled

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The majority of patients who sued Exeter Hospital in New Hampshire after a hepatitis C virus (HCV) outbreak have now settled their cases against the facility, The Associated Press reports. A traveling medical technician employed by the hospital infected them.

According to hospital attorneys, 23 out of the 33 lawsuits filed against Exeter have been settled. The rest are scheduled for mediation hearings over the next few months. Any cases that don't get resolved would go to trial in 2015.

The technician was David Kwiatkowski, an injection drug user living with hep C. He was arrested nearly two years ago after stealing painkillers and replacing them with saline-filled syringes while on the job. So far, 46 people in New Hampshire, Maryland, Kansas and Pennsylvania have been diagnosed with the same strain of the virus that he carries. One woman died from her HCV infection.

In December 2013, Kwiatkowski was sentenced to 39 years in prison for his role in the outbreak. New Hampshire lawmakers are now considering two bills in response to it—one that would require health care facilities to implement drug-free work policies and to drug test employees suspected of drug use, and another that would register all health care workers who have access to both drugs and patients.

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