

# COPLAN+CRANE CHRONICLES

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

People are beginning to be vaccinated against COVID-19, but we still have a long way to go until things can start getting back to normal. We all still need to take simple steps recommended by the CDC to help keep everyone safe.



### WEAR A MASK

Wear a mask over your mouth and nose in public settings and around people who don't live in your household.



### SOCIALLY DISTANCE

Outside your home, keep 6 feet away from people who don't live in your household.



### AVOID CROWDS

Being in a large crowd puts you at a higher risk of contracting the virus.



### CLEAN & DISINFECT

Clean frequently touched surfaces then use a household disinfectant on them.



### WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash with soap and water frequently or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

## \$2 MILLION SETTLEMENT AGAINST RADIOLOGIST AFTER PREGNANT WOMAN DIES FROM MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

When medical professionals make mistakes, the results can be catastrophic. At Coplan + Crane, we know the impact a wrongful death from medical malpractice can have on families. We believe negligent professionals need to be held accountable to make it clear that these types of mistakes are not acceptable and to help families get justice.

Recently, we were able to help one family who lost their loved ones – a young African-American mother and her unborn baby – as a result of medical malpractice. It's a serious problem.

A Johns Hopkins study found that more than 250,000 deaths per year in the United States are due to medical error. The CDC found that the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic black women was 2.5 to 3.1 times the rates for non-Hispanic white and Hispanic women.

"There's a ridiculous disparity in healthcare services across this country for people of color, particularly women of color," says **Ben Crane**. "We need to address it." In 2016, the 28-year-old woman who was 8 months pregnant went to a hos-

pital with pain on one side of her body. An ultrasound and MRI were conducted. A radiologist found nothing seriously wrong and the woman was sent home.

At 5 a.m. the next morning, the woman collapsed and was rushed back to the hospital. Doctors tried to perform an emergency C-section, but it was too late to save either the mother or her baby.

The woman's pain had been from a hematoma that was not diagnosed.

"This wasn't a close call," says **Ted Jennings**, who worked on the misdiagnosis case with Ben and **Stephen Blecha**. "In over 25 years practicing medical malpractice law, this may be the most blatant instance of malpractice I've seen."

He said the medical professional should have been looking for a hematoma because he knew the woman had been taking a blood thinner, which meant there was an increased risk of internal bleeding.

"It was absolutely horrific. Even the doc-

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**"There's a ridiculous disparity in healthcare services across this country for people of color, particularly women of color...we need to address it."**

—Ben Crane

# \$2 MILLION SETTLEMENT AGAINST RADIOLOGIST AFTER PREGNANT WOMAN DIES FROM MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

(CONTINUED FROM COVER)

tors were in tears,” Ted says.

The estates of the woman and her unborn baby hired Coplan + Crane. We pursued a wrongful death action.

During our investigation, we hired a medical expert who found that the hematoma was clearly visible on both the ultrasound and MRI. The expert determined that if the radiologist had followed acceptable standards of care, doctors could have saved both lives by stopping the blood thinner and admitting the woman to the hospital as a precaution.

The \$2 million partial settlement we secured will go in part to the woman’s six-year-old daughter.

“This little girl lost her mother and the promise of a baby sister. Our hearts absolutely break for her,” says Ted. “This settlement will ensure that she is taken care of financially for life.”

Ben says another goal of medical malpractice actions is to help bring about change.

“We try to do our part to create change in the health-care system by helping one family at a time and identifying the mistakes that were made,” says Ben. “The hope is that medical facilities and professionals will make changes to ensure these mistakes aren’t made in the future. This is the second time we have had to sue this particular physician. We were pleased to learn he has been terminated.” ■

## FIRM HAPPENINGS



International Society  
of Barristers

**Ben Crane** has been accepted as a fellow in the International Society of Barristers.

Created in 1965, the society offers memberships to legal advocates of exceptional talent around the world “whose qualities including integrity, honor, and collegiality embody the spirit of the true professional.”

New members must be elected by the Board of Governors after a nomination by an existing fellow and undergo a rigorous screening process.



*Ben Crane*

The society works to uphold the ideals of trial by jury, training in trial advocacy, civility in the adversary system and the support and improvement of our system of justice. ■



*Gia Benline*

**Gia Benline** participated in two online seminars about working with victims of sexual assault. Coplan + Crane is currently representing sexual assault victims and Gia is in direct communication with our clients.



One seminar from End Violence Against Women International discussed the investigation of sexual assault – such as working with authorities, gathering information and creating legal documentation. The other from the American Association of Justice discussed responding to victims in a legal environment – such as recognizing the sensitive nature of the crime and practicing approaches that can help victims feel more at ease.

Gia says she has plans to take part in other seminars this year.

“I’m making the extra effort to learn more about these types of cases because it helps me serve our clients,” Gia says. “I want victims to feel comfortable when they come to us. And keeping my skills up-to-date allows us to build stronger cases that help them get justice for what happened.” ■

# \$1.5 MILLION SETTLEMENT FOR WORKER HURT IN SLIP AND FALL ACCIDENT

Businesses have a responsibility to keep their premises safe. When they fail to meet that responsibility, accidents happen and people get hurt. Coplan + Crane was able to help one man in the Rockford area after a company's negligence resulted in an accident that left him injured.

One night in January 2015, our client – a custodian employed by a contractor – was working third shift at a manufacturing plant. As part of his job, he would collect trash from inside the plant and take it out to the dumpster. On this night, after walking out the door to do that, he slipped on some ice he couldn't see and fell hard to the ground.

Our client suffered spinal injuries, and also hurt his shoulder and elbow. His injuries required surgery and he was unable to return to work.

He turned to Coplan + Crane for help. **Ben Crane, Ted Jennings** and **Erv Nevitt** worked on the case.

In our investigation, we found that the sidewalk where our client slipped was poorly lit. We also found that a defective condition in the plant's drainage system led to an accumulation of ice at the spot where our client slipped and fell. We determined that the plant should have known about this hazardous condition and taken steps to prevent this type of accident.

"Contractors on third shift are also entitled to a safe workplace," says Ben. "This plant never took the steps that were necessary to fix these problems."

The plant denied any responsibility for what happened. We built our case and were ready to go to court. But then the pandemic hit.

A possible October trial date had to be postponed when the courts were shut down. As the backlog of court cases in the county grew, it was looking like a long period of time before we could go to trial. After discussing the situation with our client and his family, we determined that it was in their best interests to resolve the case sooner rather than later.

We were able to negotiate a settlement for \$1.5 million. Ben says he's happy the firm was able to help our client, who still has neck and elbow problems and suffers from chronic pain.

"He's a family man who is very involved in the community," says Ben. "Also an Eagle Scout, like Erv, who got to know the family well. This should never have happened to him. But settling the case made sense for a lot of reasons."

He also hopes the settlement helps send a message to companies that they need to take workplace safety seriously. ■





## ... SPOTLIGHT ...



**JUHI DESAI**, a front desk receptionist and legal assistant, graduated from Loyola University, where she had a double major in criminal justice and political science.

As a receptionist, Juhi greets clients when they come to our office. She also helps attorneys with cases in the pre- and post-litigation phase. Her duties have involved inputting new cases into our system and helping with settlement statements and demand letters. And her contact with clients doesn't end at the front door.

"I reach out to clients to make sure all of their questions are answered and follow up with them to let them know we are working on their case," she says.

"Juhi's incredible kindness and understanding makes her the perfect person to greet our clients when they walk into the firm and also makes her an outstanding paralegal," says attorney Blake Vance.

Her experience at Coplan + Crane is preparing Juhi for her career goal of practicing law. She has been accepted to Northern Illinois, Suffolk University and UIC John Marshall, and is waiting to hear back from other law schools before deciding where she'll study.

The daughter of immigrants, Juhi has been going to law offices since she was a child as her parents worked to become citizens. One attorney in particular who has been working with her family has been a source of inspiration and showed her how the law can help people.

"The amount of integrity she has and the work she has done for us is amazing," says Juhi. "I hope I can give that back to future clients of mine."

In her free time, she enjoys reading, painting and hanging out with family and friends. ■

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