

Potential St. Mary's lawsuit complicated by patient's identity theft

By: Jim Stingl

Manquis Daniels died after heart surgery at Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee. His family, understandably upset, threatened to sue the hospital.

But that family made a startling confession to hospital staff after Daniels, 49, died on June 14. He had checked into the hospital on June 8 using the name of his brother, James Daniels, who works for the U.S. Postal Service and has health insurance.

It's a form of medical identity theft, a growing problem for hospitals, insurance companies and the people whose identity and insurance information is swiped.

Imagine trying to get a jury to side with you on a malpractice lawsuit as you're admitting that you defrauded the hospital while coming in the front door.

Did James Daniels, 51, know about the switch, or was his brother pulling a fast one on him? That's not clear. The Daniels family did not return my calls last week.

The details of what happened come from the investigative report of the Milwaukee County medical examiner's office.

It says Manquis Daniels of Milwaukee was a smoker who had a history of high blood pressure. On May 25, a catheterization found he had severe coronary artery disease.

It doesn't say whether Daniels was employed. Presumably, he lacked health insurance, which explains why he was trying to piggyback on his brother's coverage. His wife, Marie, told the medical examiner's office that doctors called him a "ticking time bomb," which frightened him into scheduling the surgery.

According to the medical examiner's report:

A surgeon at St. Mary's performed a quintuple bypass, but after surgery Daniels coded in the intensive care unit. His blood pressure dropped, and he was sent back to the operating room where doctors found blood coming from the right coronary artery graft, possibly caused by chest compressions performed on him.

The bleeding was stopped, but Daniels had suffered brain damage because of lack of oxygen. His brain activity ceased on June 11, and he was pronounced dead three days later.

Marie Daniels told a medical examiner's investigator that her husband was walking and

Typically, it's a lower level data entry clerk or similar employee who is paid to extract patient identification information and sell it to dealers on the black market," said James Quiggle, spokesman for Coalition Against Insurance Fraud.



**Coalition Against
Insurance Fraud**

doing well after surgery, but started having trouble breathing after a nurse gave him something intravenously. She claims a second nurse asked the other nurse, "Why did you give him that?" She also claims her husband was dropped while being moved by hospital staff. The family said they planned to sue.

The hospital denied those allegations and said "our investigation shows absolutely no evidence of improper care in this case."

An autopsy was performed at the medical examiner's office, but the cause of death is still pending further testing and review. Daniels' funeral was held last week.

It was after he was dead that his daughter informed staff that the guy the hospital thought all along was James Daniels was actually his brother Manquis, the report says.

The more common form of medical identify theft is an inside job that goes after insurance proceeds for treatment that was never provided.

"Typically, it's a lower level data entry clerk or similar employee who is paid to extract patient identification information and sell it to dealers on the black market," said James Quiggle,