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suits & deals

\$1.2M for Auto Negligence

Elyea and Wuefling v. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital: A Middlesex County jury awarded \$1.2 million on Jan. 31 to an Oxford woman and a Freehold man injured by a security van at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

Gweneth Elyea, 48, at the time of the

accident, Carl Wuefling, then 63, were visiting a patient at the hospital on April 18, 1996. While walking along a sidewalk in front of the hospital, they were hit by a security van backing out of an emergency bay. The impact sent Elyea and Wuefling flying and they landed on the street.

The hospital admitted liability, and the trial on damages only began on Jan. 24 before Superior Court Judge **Bryan Garruto**. After five days of trial, the jury awarded \$1.2 million to Elyea, who suffered a closed head injury that led to permanent neurological problems, including a form of vertigo. Wuefling, who suffered only cuts and bruises, was awarded \$15,000.

The hospital made a pretrial offer of \$200,000 to settle the case, both sides said. The plaintiffs' lawyer is **Richard Gantner**, a partner with Somerville's **Heathcote & Gantner**. The hospital's lawyer is **Thomas Chansky**, a partner with North Brunswick's **Chansky, Philibosian, Russell, Killmurray & Kinneally**.

— By *Matt Ackermann*