

# Man hurt in hospital in 1991 dies at 27

• Walsh Jesuit graduate  
in partial coma retained  
awareness, mother says

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For seven years, Sharad K. Lal suffered a partial coma that severely limited his ability to move and speak.

But his family knew that he was still aware of what was going on around him.

When his younger brother walked by his bed at his Akron home, he would follow the sound by turning his head.

And the day his mother told him that his condition led to a major policy change at St. Thomas Hospital, it brought tears to his eyes.

Mr. Lal died on Friday. He was 27. He was a premedical student who entered a coma and never recovered after checking in at St. Thomas with leg pain in November 1991.

Mr. Lal had hoped to follow in the footsteps of his father, Dr. Manohar Lal, an obstetrics and gynecological specialist at St. Thomas, according to Constance Lal, Sharad's mother.

Mr. Lal graduated from Walsh Jesuit High School in 1989, where he was an energetic member of the football team. He was enrolled in a premed program at the University of Cincinnati when he entered St. Thomas' pain management clinic.

By the time he was moved to a different hospital six weeks later, he was so severely brain damaged that he would need 24-hour care for the rest of his life.

In 1996, a jury awarded the Lals \$10.8 million in their malpractice lawsuit against two doctors who treated their son. The jury verdict against St. Thomas doctors Bashar Mubashir and Frederick Marquinez was handed down after six hours of deliberations in a trial that lasted more than a week. St. Thomas settled with the family out

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## LAL

• Summa president  
offers sympathy to family

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of court for an undisclosed amount.

Mr. Lal died after being treated for Hodgkin's disease, Constance Lal said.

Akron attorney Tim Scanlon, who represented the Lals in their lawsuits, said, "I don't think there is any question" that Mr. Lal's death was a result of injuries he incurred in the 1991 accident at St. Thomas.

"Like all brain-injured and semi-comatose people, they are subject to certain conditions which generally degrade the body," Scanlon said.

No further lawsuits will be filed, he said.

Manohar Lal, who also practices at Akron General Medical Center, said his son was a positive and happy young man.

Lal was practicing at St. Thomas at the time, but, according to Constance Lal, no hospital staff ever apologized to the family.

Akron attorney Tom Treadon, who represented St. Thomas, said yesterday he didn't know if the hospital ever apologized.

"It's arguable that an apology would be an admission of liability," Treadon said.

Albert F. Gilbert, Summa Health System president and chief executive officer, released the following statement late yesterday: "We're very sorry to hear of the Lals' loss. Our sincere sympathy is with the family. We are also extremely sorry for the pain and suffering they have endured as a result of the mistakes made in their son's care."

Lal said he cut back his practice considerably after the accident and took off the past five months to help his family deal with the tragedy.

"If possible, I would avoid putting blame on anybody because what has happened has happened and it cannot be undone," Lal said. "I don't want patients to lose confidence in the medical system."

Returning to work at St. Thomas had been awkward, but he has focused on being a professional, he said.

"I'm supposed to be a physician," Lal said.

Trial testimony revealed that Marquinez, a hematology and oncology specialist and employee of

Mubashir, ordered high dosages of morphine for Mr. Lal, who was then 20, to cope with the leg pain.

When Mr. Lal developed side effects the next day, including an inability to urinate, doctors were notified but did not respond. Staff members also failed to monitor Mr. Lal's vital signs for 14 hours while waiting for a response.

After his heart stopped because of the morphine, it took 28 minutes to revive him. The brain damage was mostly irreversible.

Constance Lal said she went to the hospital "all the time" after that.

"I told him he was absolutely strong enough to survive," she said.

On the 10th day of his coma, she told her son the hospital posted new protocols because of what happened, and tears came down both his cheeks, she said.

Mr. Lal's hearing was always intact, she said.

Since then, he was treated at several hospitals, including Lake Erie Institute of Rehabilitation in Erie, Pa., which specializes in treating patients with brain injuries.

Eventually, he was transferred home to be cared for by his family. His ability to communicate was limited to laughter.

The Lals described their son as a generous, spirited and fun-loving young man.

After the accident, Mr. Lal took a great interest in his youngest brother, Jehonathan, now 15, Constance Lal said.

He would laugh at his jokes and turn his head whenever he heard Jehonathan pass by, she said.

Mr. Lal is also survived by brothers Rajiv, 29, Dev, 26, and Dev's wife Tiffani, all of Akron.

Services will be at 4 p.m. Sunday at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1250 W. Exchange St., where Dr. Clifford J. Hayes will officiate.

The family asked that, in lieu of flowers, mourners make donations to their favorite charity in Sharad Lal's name.