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Family tells of tragedy following fatal injection

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EAST
BRUNSWICK:

Catherine Fulton
describes watching
her husband die as
"the nightmare
weekend."

Richard Fulton, 49,
knew his days were
numbered after
officials at Saint
Peter's University
Hospital in New
Brunswick told him
he had been injected
improperly with a
chemotherapy drug
meant to be
administered
intravenously,
according to a
malpractice lawsuit
filed by the family's
attorney yesterday
in Superior Court,
New Brunswick.

The lawsuit claims
the drug,

Courtesy of Fulton family

Richard and Catherine Fulton with
their children, Ryan and Katie.

JASON TOWLEN/Staff
photographer

Catherine Fulton, center, wept
during a press conference yesterday
announcing a malpractice lawsuit
against Saint Peter's University
Hospital. Fulton was flanked by her
sister, Diane Dumne, left, and her
attorney, Ronald Goldfaden.



Vincristine, was injected in the spinal area.

At a press conference yesterday at the Brunswick Hilton, the widow and attorney Ronald Goldfaden recalled Fulton's "heroic and heartwrenching death."

One by one, Fulton's bodily functions shut down -- he lost his hearing and his gag reflex, and finally even the ability to swallow.

Courtesy of Fulton family

Richard Fulton with Ryan, 12.

Knowing Richard had days to live, the couple renewed their wedding vows. The Jackson man summoned his children -- 12-year-old Ryan and 4-year-old Katie -- and hugged and kissed them goodbye.

"My children have not and cannot adjust to this," Catherine Fulton said yesterday. "They need their father every day and he's just not there."

In his last days, Richard Fulton

ampul and syringe, Siegel injected the drug in Fulton's spinal area, Goldfaden said.

"No layman would have made the mistake he (Siegel) made. This is the most egregious example of a medical malpractice case I have seen in 26 years" as an attorney, Goldfaden said.

Saint Peter's yesterday released a statement expressing its sympathy for the victim's family and saying it acknowledged from the beginning that the tragedy occurred.

"The family was advised in full, in concert with the private attending physician at the time of the incident," the statement read. "We do not wish to further sensationalize the family's tragedy."

A hospital spokesperson would not comment on whether the doctor continued to practice at Saint Peter's.

According to Goldfaden, he has attempted for five months to settle the matter "expeditiously and discreetly" with the hospital, doctor, their lawyers and insurers, but that he has been "stonewalled," forcing him to file suit on behalf of the widow and her children.

At yesterday's news conference, Catherine Fulton wept as she recalled her husband's swift, painful death.

"I don't want any family to experience the pain I am going through," she said. Married 18 years, she described husband as the best friend who "finished my sentences."

She said the hospital has not been forthcoming with information on what led to her husband's death, or what remedial measures had been taken.

"By keeping this all secret, history repeats itself," she said. "The protocol needs to be changed."
