



American Society for Pharmacy Law

PHARMACY EDUCATION - NEGLIGENCE

Student pharmacist's death triggers NY lawsuit against preceptor and university

The *Rye (NY) Daily Voice* reported on June 20 that a civil lawsuit has been filed in Queens Supreme Court by the family of James Yoo, who died in 2013 while completing a school-sponsored experiential rotation at Rockwell Compounding Associates in Rye. The suit, which names the pharmacy and its owner, also names St. John's University College of Pharmacy and Health Services as defendants. According to the report, Yoo was seen returning fentanyl powder to stock prior to being found collapsed on the pharmacy floor. An autopsy report determined that he died from fentanyl toxicity, presumably from percutaneous absorption of the drug while handling it. The report quotes the attorney for the plaintiffs as saying "the lawsuit is against the pharmacist and the pharmacy for improper training and supervision. ... But, also against St. John's for not properly vetting the pharmacy, which not only had a prior history of problems, but were currently under investigation when Mr. Yoo was placed there."

The report indicated that calls placed to Rockwell Compounding was answered by a recorded message and that "St. John's did not immediately return a call for comment." [Donnelly B. Rye pharmacist sued for negligence in student extern's death. *Rye Daily Voice* 2014 June 20; <http://bit.ly/1qBwk90>]

A report on the lawsuit in *LOHUD The Journal News* reviewed in greater detail disciplinary actions against the compounding pharmacy by the NY Board of Regents. It also indicated that a spokesperson for St. John's had responded to inquiries that the university did not comment on pending litigation, and quoted a local Rye pharmacist, not affiliated with the defendant pharmacy, as saying "I think there's more involved than what is coming out. The whole thing doesn't make sense. If he touched a little powder, that shouldn't have been fatal." [Shillinglaw G. Student's death blamed on drug exposure at Rye pharmacy. *LOHUD The Journal News* 2014 June 18; <http://lohud.us/1js8Tdd>]