



Lawyers For Family Of Late E. Steven Collins Hope His Death Will Serve As Lesson To Public

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By *Cherri Gregg*

PHILADELPHIA (CBS) — Philadelphia broadcaster E. Steven Collins died of a massive heart attack last September while under the care of a community hospital. His attorneys filed lawsuit earlier this year and say they're hoping his death helps educate patients on how to advocate for care.

Attorney Tom Kline represents the Collins family and alleged in a lawsuit filed in state court that E. Steven had a blocked artery that lead to a massive heart attack. Kline says Collins needed life-saving heart surgery. The only problem— the community hospital treating him was not equipped to perform the procedure.

“Had E. Collins been assessed properly, had he been managed properly, had he been transferred properly to a tertiary care center in a quick and efficient manner, he would be alive today,” says Kline, “This lawsuit serves as a potential educational tool, not only to physicians but also to the community.”

“There is no manual to the healthcare system,” says Betty Long, a registered nurse and founder of Guardian Nurses Healthcare Advocates. She’s worked in healthcare for more than three decades and her company helps patients with chronic, and sometimes life-threatening illness navigate the healthcare system. When asked about community hospitals, she says they are a conveniently located option for some illnesses and injuries, but patients should be aware that the centers usually offer limited services.

“It’s kind of like good for an appendectomy or good for a fracture, but I wouldn’t go there for brain surgery— that kind of thing,” says Long.

Long says different hospitals have different levels of expertise in various areas, but the average consumer does not know that.

“When you think about the decisions people make– it’s often local,” she says, “but if you are dealing with a specialty issue or a life-threatening issue– we at Guardian Nurses suggest that you go to an academic medical center.”

Examples include Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, University of Pennsylvania Hospital, Temple University Hospital and many more in the Philadelphia area. But what if you call the EMS for an emergency?

“This is about thinking ahead. Asking– in an emergency or when I am not feeling well, where do I want to go,” says Long, who notes individuals with chronic health issues, like diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease should create a healthcare plan for emergencies.

“I don’t want you making those decisions when you are not feeling well,” says Long, “patients have to think about it– it’s your health.”