

COURT FILE NO.: *NB-93-2013*

IN THE COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH OF
NEW BRUNSWICK

COUR DU BANC DE LA REINE DU
NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

TRIAL DIVISION

DIVISION DE

JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF MIRAMICHI

CIRCONSCRIPTION JUDICIAIRE DE
MIRAMICHI

BETWEEN:

ENTRE:

ALTA CHRISTINE LITTLE

- and -
Plaintiff,

-et-
Demandeurs,

HORIZON HEALTH NETWORK, a corporation
incorporated under the laws of the Province
of New Brunswick

Defendant



Defendeurs.

Brought under the *Class Proceedings Act*,
S.N.B. 2011, c.125

**NOTICE OF ACTION WITH
STATEMENT OF CLAIM ATTACHED**
(FORM 16A)

**AVIS DE POURSUITE ACCOMPAGNE
D'UN EXPOSE DE LA DEMANDE**
(FORMULE 16A)

TO: Horizon Health Network
155 Pleasant Street
Miramichi, NB E1V 1Y3

DESTINIAIRE:

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN
COMMENCED AGAINST YOU BY
FILING THIS NOTICE OF ACTION WITH
STATEMENT OF CLAIM ATTACHED

PAR LE DEPOT DU PRESENT
AVIS DE POURSUITE ACCOMPAGNE
D'UN EXPOSE DE LA DEMANDE, UNE
POURSUIE JUDICIAIRE A ETE
ENGAGEE CONTRE VOUS.

If you wish to defend these proceedings, either you or a New Brunswick lawyer acting on your behalf must prepare your Statement of Defence in the form prescribed by the Rules of the Court and serve it on the Plaintiff or her lawyer at the address shown below and, with proof of such service, file it in this Court office together with the filing fee of \$50.00:

- (a) if you are served in New Brunswick, WITHIN 20 DAYS after service on you of this Notice of Action with Statement of Claim Attached or
- (b) if you are served elsewhere in Canada or in the United States of America, WITHIN 40 DAYS after such service, or
- (c) if you are served anywhere else, WITHIN 60 DAYS after such service.

If you fail to do so, you may be deemed to have admitted any claim made against you, and without further notice to you, **JUDGMENT MAY BE GIVEN AGAINST YOU IN YOUR ABSENCE.**

Si vous desirez presenter une defense dans cette instance, vous-meme ou un avocat du Nouveau-Brunswick charge de vous représenter devrez rediger un expose de votre defense en la form prescrite par les Regles de procedure, le signifier au demandeur ou a son avocat a l'adresse indiquee ci-dessous et le déposer au greffe de cette Cour avec un droit de depot de 50\$ et une preuve de sa signification:

- (a) DANS LES 20 JOURS de la signification qui vous sera faite du present avis de poursuite accompagne d'un expose de la demande, si elle vous est faite au Nouveau-Brunswick ou
- (b) DANS LES 40 JOURS de la signification, si elle vous est faite dans une autre region du Canada ou dans les Etats-Unis d' Amerique ou
- (c) DANS LES 60 JOURS de la signification, si elle vous est faite ailleurs.

Si vous omettez de le faire vous pourrez etre repute avoir admis toute demande formulee contre vous et, sans autre avis, **JUGEMENT POURRA ETRE RENDU CONTRE VOUS EN VOTRE ABSENCE.**

You are advised that:

(a) You are entitled to issue documents and present evidence in the proceeding in English or French or both;

(b) the Plaintiff intends to proceed in the English language; and

(c) your Statement of Defence must indicate the language in which you intend to proceed.

THIS NOTICE is signed and sealed for the Court of Queen's Bench by *M. Cropps*, Clerk of the Court at Miramichi, New Brunswick, on the *21st* day of *October*, 200*3* *uee*

[Handwritten Signature]

(clerk)

Court Seal

Miramichi Court House
673 King George Highway
Miramichi, NB
E1V 1N6

(address of court office)

Sachez que:

(a) vous avez le droit dans la present instance, d'emettre des documents et de presenter votre preuve en francais, en anglais ou dans les deux langues;

(b) le demandeur a l'intention d'utiliser la langue; et

(c) l'expose de votre defense doit indiquer la langede que vous avez l'intention d'utiliser.

CET AVIS est signe et scelle au nom de la Cour de Banc de la Reine par greffier de la Court a ce 200 .

(greffier)

Sceau de la Cour



(adresse du greffe)

STATEMENT OF CLAIM

The Parties

1. The proposed Representative Plaintiff, Alta Christine Little (formerly Gillis), resides in Miramichi in the Province of New Brunswick and was born on June 5, 1961. She brings this action on her own behalf, and on behalf of a class of similarly situated persons pursuant to the *Class Proceedings Act*, S.N.B. 2011, c.125.
2. The Defendant, Horizon Health Network, is a body corporate constituted pursuant to the *Regional Health Authorities Act*, S.N.B. 2002, c. R-5.05, to manage and control the operation of, and was at all material times responsible for the operation, supervision and management of the Miramichi Regional Hospital in Miramichi, Province of New Brunswick, its employees, agents and servants, including its staff in the colposcopy clinic.

Material Facts

3. The Defendant operates a colposcopy clinic (the “clinic”) at the Miramichi Regional Hospital (the “Hospital”). Colposcopy is a medical diagnostic procedure which provides an illuminated and magnified view of the cervix and tissues of the vagina and vulva.
4. Between 1999 to May 24, 2013, the method used to clean and disinfect colposcopy biopsy forceps (the “forceps”) at the clinic involved a high-level disinfection. Sterilization after disinfection was not always properly performed as required by the accepted and adopted North American standard which has been in place for more than 50 years. The standard of practice is to sterilize the forceps in every case. Sterilization is a step additional to disinfection which utilizes heat and pressure or chemicals to kill all life forms on the instruments subjected to treatment.
5. On May 24, 2013, the Defendant discovered that the clinic had not followed sterilization practices on forceps used for biopsies at the clinic in accordance with the longtime North

American standard. Once allegedly discovered by hospital administration, the Defendant waited nearly three months before it informed the Plaintiff and Class Members that they may have been treated with unsterilized forceps. At least 2,497 patients at the clinic, including the Plaintiff, were treated with the unsterilized forceps.

The Representative Plaintiff

6. Between 1999 and 2013, the Plaintiff was a patient at the clinic of the Defendant Hospital.
7. During this period, the Plaintiff underwent a biopsy using unsterilized forceps as part of her colposcopy procedure.
8. On or about August 28, 2013, the Plaintiff received correspondence on Horizon Health Network letterhead (the “Notice”) advising her that the clinic may have exposed some of its patients, including herself, to a risk of infection by not consistently following the recommended standard of practice procedure of sterilization of its biopsy forceps. As a result, the Plaintiff and Class Members have been placed at risk of contracting the following diseases (the “diseases”):
 - a. Hepatitis B;
 - b. Hepatitis C; and,
 - c. HIV.
9. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV are potentially life threatening, incurable diseases. All of the diseases carry the added stigma of being known as sexually transmitted diseases.
10. Also in the Notice dated August 28, 2013, the Defendant further advised the Plaintiff and Class Members of the need for medical testing to determine whether they had contracted any of the diseases. The Notice further recognized that this information could be very upsetting. A requisition for bloodwork was included with the Notice.

The Class

11. The proposed class is defined to include the following persons:

All persons who were patients at the Miramichi Regional Hospital colposcopy between 1999 and May 24, 2013 who received a Notice from the Horizon Health Network offering the option to have a blood test for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

Causes of Action

Negligence

12. The Defendant Hospital is responsible to ensure that systems are in place to promote a high level of quality and patient care. The Defendant's conduct fell below the reasonable standard of care expected of it under the circumstances. The Defendant's conduct was negligent. Particulars of this negligence include:

- (a) only disinfecting the forceps when it knew or ought to have known that sterilization was necessary to kill the viruses which cause the diseases;
- (b) providing improper or no training to and supervision of its employees in sterilization procedures, or else hiring and employing incompetent staff;
- (c) choosing not to conduct timely periodic reviews or audits of sterilization procedures;
- (d) not having a written procedure in place for sterilization of the forceps and ensuring, if there was a policy, it was read and understood by staff;
- (e) choosing not to have or implement an inappropriate and inadequate policy of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement with respect to the clinic and the sterilization of instruments used in the clinic;

- (f) choosing to implement inadequate systems, or having no reasonable systems, to ensure patient safety in the clinic and in respect of sterilization;
- (g) choosing not to recognize, or attempt to monitor or discover, that its procedures for cleaning the forceps over a 14 year period between 1999 and May 24, 2013 were inadequate and substandard; and,
- (h) falling below the reasonable standard of care expected of it under the circumstances.

Corporate and Vicarious Liability

13. The Defendant is corporately and systemically liable for having no or inappropriate and inadequate systems of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement as described above. In addition, the Defendant's employees, agents and servants were at fault or negligent in using methods of sterilization which they knew or ought to have known were inadequate and substandard, for which the Defendant is vicariously liable.

Breach of Contract

14. The Defendant has a contractual relationship for the provision of medical services to the Plaintiff and Class Members. The contract was, in exchange for consideration, to conduct pathology testing on the Plaintiff's surgical biopsies obtained by adherence to generally acceptable standards of cleanliness, disinfection and sterilization of the instruments provided by the Defendant to physicians for the purpose, and to provide a reasonably reliable pathology diagnosis. To this end, the Defendant provided clinic facilities, surgical biopsy instruments, and pathology testing facilities, these latter presided over by salaried pathologists paid by the Defendant.
15. An important object of the contract was to provide to the patient the psychological benefit of knowing that disease was absent, or if present, what course of treatment for the diagnosed disease was indicated, and that the conduct of the surgical biopsy procedure

necessary to obtain a diagnosis did not expose the patient to additional unnecessary risk of disease.

16. An implied term of that contractual relationship is that the Defendant would exercise due care to employ competent and properly trained staff and that it would use properly sterilized equipment when treating the Plaintiff and Class Members. The Defendant has breached this contractual duty, and the Plaintiff repeats the particulars of negligence pleaded above.
17. It was foreseeable by the Defendant that a breach of generally accepted standards of cleanliness, disinfection and sterilization would destroy the psychological benefit which was an important object of the surgical pathology testing, which benefit included the benefit of believing not only that a reasonably accurate diagnosis had been given, but that the testing did not impose unnecessary additional risk of disease.
18. The Plaintiff further states that the Defendant additionally made an implied promise of performance that the surgical biopsy forceps in use in the clinic would be cleaned, disinfected and sterilized in accordance with generally accepted standards, and the Defendant is strictly liable for breach of this promise.

Breach of Fiduciary Duty

19. The Defendant stands in the position of fiduciary to the Plaintiff and Class Members. The Defendant's relationship with the Plaintiff and Class Members was one of trust and confidence, obliging the Defendant to act with good faith and loyalty and to never prefer its personal interests to the detriment of the professional duty it owed the Plaintiff and Class Members. The Defendant's undertaking to act with loyalty toward the patient was a necessary incident of the faith and confidence required of its patients when exposing their bodily integrity to surgical invasion. The Defendant's patients are particularly vulnerable and must place their trust and confidence in the Defendant to meet the generally accepted standards of cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of its surgical instruments. The Defendant has undertaken, as a fiduciary, to ensure that these standards are met.

20. The Defendant breached its fiduciary obligations by choosing not to clean, disinfect, and sterilize the surgical biopsy forceps to a generally accepted standard, thereby profiting and/or saving resources at the expense of the health of the Plaintiff and Class Members. The Defendant chose to save resources at the expense of the Plaintiff and Class Members' risk to health, by choosing to have insufficient sterilized instruments to service patient demand.

Violation of Privacy and Intrusion into Seclusion

21. In conducting the release of information to and the testing of affected patients outside the physician-patient relationship in such a manner as to invade the confidentiality of medical information and the privacy of the patients, the Defendant breached not only duties inherent in its fiduciary relationship with the Plaintiff and Class Members but has also committed the tort of violation of privacy against the Plaintiff and Class Members, and the Plaintiff cites the *Personal Health Information Privacy and Access Act*, SNB 2009, c P-7.05 and the *Hospital Act*, SNB 1992, c H-6.1.
22. The Defendant intentionally intruded upon the seclusion of the Plaintiff and Class Members' confidentiality of medical information in disclosing to the public unsterilized colposcopy equipment was being used. The intrusion was highly offensive in that other private methods of dissemination existed other than the use of public employees delivering envelopes to the Plaintiff and Class Members.

Causation and Damages

23. As a result of the Defendant's breach of its obligations, the Plaintiff and Class Members have suffered loss, including invasion of bodily integrity by reason of blood testing. Such loss was foreseeable by the Defendant, and is admitted in the Notice.

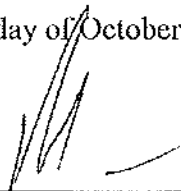
24. Particulars of the loss or damages suffered by the Plaintiff and Class Members include the following:
- a) damages in tort for nervous shock, serious and prolonged stress and anxiety after being informed by the Defendant of the risk of infection and the need for medical testing;
 - b) damages for mental distress in breach of contract;
 - c) damages for battery;
 - d) damages for invasion into privacy;
 - e) damages for intrusion into seclusion;
 - f) aggravated damages arising out of the Defendant's betrayal of trust and confidence in not timely informing its patients of their potential exposure to disease; and,
 - g) punitive or exemplary damages.
25. The Plaintiff states that the Defendant's breach of recognized infection control protocol over such an extended period could happen only by reason of gross negligence, bad faith and deliberate misconduct. The Defendant's conduct was high-handed, outrageous, reckless, deliberate, and callous, and systemic in nature. In particular, the Defendant's 14-year delay in warning the Plaintiff and Class Members of the risks to their health and the risks to the health of their loved ones, and the withholding of this information from the public for such a prolonged period is unconscionable, such that an award of punitive damages is merited.

Relief Sought

26. The Plaintiff claims, on her behalf, and on behalf of the Class:
- a) an order certifying this action as a class action;
 - b) general damages, to be assessed by way of aggregate relief;
 - c) aggravated damages;
 - d) punitive or exemplary damages;
 - e) costs, including the fees and expenses of expert witnesses in attending at discovery and trial, and the Harmonized Sales Tax thereon;
 - f) the costs of providing appropriate notice to Class Members and administering this proposed class action for their benefit;
 - g) interest pursuant to the provisions of the *Judicature Act*, R.S.N.B. 1973, c. J-2 and *Rules of Court*, N.B. Reg. 82-73; and,
 - h) such further and other relief as this Honourable Court deems just.

DATED at Halifax, in the Province of Nova Scotia, this 18th day of October, 2013.

Name of Lawyer for the Plaintiff:
 Name of Firm:
 Business Address:



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Members