

COURTS

Patient sues Park Royal Hospital for alleged sex abuse

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A former patient of Park Royal Hospital, Lee County's only inpatient psychiatric hospital, claims in a lawsuit that another patient sexually abused her while she was undergoing an involuntary mental health evaluation at the health center.

The 38-year-old woman, identified as "Elizabeth Doe," was admitted Sept. 5, 2014, under Florida's Baker Act, according to the lawsuit. At the time, medical staff noted that she appeared to be psychotic, delusional, paranoid and at risk of hurting herself or others, the suit claims.

She was also prescribed an antidepressant, and antipsychotic and a relaxant drug.

"Her insight and judgment were both deemed fair to poor," it notes.

But, at some point that day, she said a 38-year-old male patient she did not know approached her in a common area and took her into his bathroom, where he had sex with her.

This happened, she said, despite the fact that medical staff was supposed to check on her welfare every 15 minutes.

The woman argues that the hospital was negligent in allowing this to happen. At the time, she was a "vulnerable adult" under Florida law whom the hospital should have protected from such sexual contact, the lawsuit states.

Chris Hansen, the hospital's director of business development, said administrators may not comment on pending legal cases. The hospital's parent company, the Franklin, Tennessee-based Acadia Healthcare, also did not comment.

The woman told her boyfriend about the incident when he came to visit her hours later, according to her attorney Dennis Webb. He then reported it to authorities.

"The lady went into Park Royal to get help, and she left there in a police car basically and was taken to a rape crisis center, which is an extremely dehumanizing procedure for a woman," Webb said.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office later determined that the sex was consensual and that no crime had occurred, Webb said. But he said the woman was too impaired to give consent.

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