

Reprinted from The Sun Sentinel and The Palm Beach Post

Autopsy: Bad Reaction to Lidocaine Killed Woman After Liposuction

Published March 19, 2010

An accidental bad reaction to the anesthetic lidocaine killed a Miramar nurse who died after a liposuction at a Weston medspa, according to the autopsy report released Thursday.

The sedative given during cosmetic surgery on Sept. 25 caused Rohie Kah-Orukotan, 37, to have a seizure and cardiac arrest, plunging her into a coma that left her brain dead, the autopsy by the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office found.

The autopsy cleared her cosmetic surgeon, Dr. Omar Brito Marin, of giving her too much of the anesthetic propofol, one of the mistakes cited by the Florida Department of Health when it suspended his medical license earlier this month.

But the autopsy was silent on whether Brito gave her too much lidocaine. Brito's attorney said the amount was proper; the family's attorney said it was excessive.

"Dr. Brito feels vindicated in one sense, because the report makes clear that Ms. Orukotan's death was a tragic, unexpected casualty of this surgery," said his attorney, Brian Bieber. "Nothing Dr. Brito or any surgeon or the hospital staff could have done could have prevented this tragedy."

Brito is appealing his suspension and immediately sent a copy of the autopsy report to the health department asking that his license be restored, Bieber said.

Despite the finding, the Orukotans still contend Brito was negligent and still hope police file criminal charges against him, said their attorney, Anthony Russo. The Broward Sheriff's Office is investigating the death.

Russo said the health department has determined that the doctor should not have done the procedure with anesthesia in a medspa that had no emergency medical backup system, that he lacked the credentials to do the procedure, and that he lacked the training to give the anesthesia.

"He was negligent, which is what we have been saying from the beginning," Russo said.

Health department officials could not be located for comment Thursday evening.