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Child's Family Sues, Accuses Tripler Doctors Of Malpractice

Attorney Says Doctors 'Responded Inappropriately'

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HONOLULU -- The parents of a 2-year-old boy said he suffered brain damage because of medical mistakes Tripler Army Medical Center made and they are suing the military.

The boy is now blind and has difficulty moving. His family's lawyer blames mistreatment at Tripler for his condition.

Darius Kohl is an Army mechanic who was stationed at Schofield Barracks when his wife, Karen, gave birth to their son, Parker Benjamin Kohl, in December 2003.

He appeared to be a normal, happy baby, according to the family. However, doctors found that Parker had a congenital heart defect that was treatable with surgery.

His lawyer said little Parker developed a respiratory infection, common in babies with heart defects, but Tripler doctors did not put him on drugs that are routinely given to babies with similar conditions, according to the family's attorney, Rick Fried.

Parker's infection worsened and in May 2004, he was hospitalized at Tripler.

"They responded inappropriately and very late to the acute problems he was having in the hospital," Fried said.

Tripler prematurely took out his breathing tube and an IV line that could have been used to quickly treat him with drugs, Fried said.

Parker had a heart attack on his 10th day in the hospital.

"Because they hadn't had a line in, they had to scramble around and get a line placed, and by then, unfortunately, he suffered major brain damage," said Fried.

He said medical teams gave Parker the over-the-counter decongestant Afrin for about 10 hours before the heart attack with no other treatment.

"So there was a long period of time where they could have reacted and did not react," Fried said.

Parker now needs breathing and feeding tubes that must be constantly monitored.

"I think it's unlikely he'll be able to breath on his own. He won't be able to feed himself. He won't be able to see," Fried said.

Fried has asked the military for about \$25 million to cover the boy's medical costs for the rest of his life.

A year ago, Fried sued Tripler on behalf of another family, whose newborn infant boy was mistakenly given carbon dioxide instead of oxygen, leaving him in a vegetative state.

The Kohls have moved to Washington state, where the Army is providing nurses for Parker's care 10 hours a day. His parents are covering things the rest of the time.

Tripler said it cannot comment on any pending lawsuit. However, the medical center released a statement that said, "We take the care and safety of all our patients seriously."

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