

## TOWN NEWS

NEW BRITAIN • BRISTOL • BERLIN • PLAINVILLE • SOUTHLINGTON

## Sons Sue Pharmacy In Mother's Death

By LORETTA WALDMAN  
COURANT STAFF WRITER

The sons of a Southington woman who died last June because of a botched prescription are suing CVS and the pharmacist who dispensed the ultimately lethal medication.

## SOUTHLINGTON

The complaint, served to the defendants Wednesday, contends that "pharmaceutical negligence and wanton and

reckless misconduct" on the part of CVS Pharmacy Inc. and Shylae Vecchio, the pharmacist who filled Donna Marie Altieri's prescription, contributed to the fatal mistake.

To be filed in New Britain Superior Court on behalf of Daren and Derek Altieri by Watertown attorney Michael D'Amico, the suit seeks monetary and punitive damages in excess of \$15,000.

In a prepared statement, unnamed corporate officials at CVS extended their sympathies and condolences to the Altieri family, but declined to comment further.

"Because CVS has been named in a lawsuit in relation to this matter, it would be inappropriate for us to make any further statements," the release said.

Daren and Derek Altieri have said the suit is part of a multi-pronged strategy intended to expose and prevent prescription errors at CVS and elsewhere. The brothers, 29 and 32, also are seeking regulatory changes that include mandating the reporting of prescription errors to the state Department of Consumer Protection.

Angered by the way that agency, the

state Commission on Pharmacy and CVS have handled the mistake that killed their mother, the brothers have said they decided to publicize her story earlier this month.

Donna Marie Altieri, 51, walked into the CVS Pharmacy at 310 Main St., Southington, on June 14, 2001. She carried a prescription for camphorated tincture of opium, or paregoric, from her Meriden physician, Dr. Jackson Maille for treatment of chronic diarrhea. Vecchio, 26, mistakenly filled the prescription with tincture of opium, a similar sounding, but far more potent diarrhea

remedy with 25 times the morphine.

The next day, soon after taking a teaspoon of the medication, Altieri became weak and complained of feeling tired and achy. Her condition quickly deteriorated, and by 6 p.m. she was dead. An autopsy determined the cause of death to be an overdose of morphine.

Woonsocket, R.I.-based CVS has acknowledged the mistake, but according to company documents, blames the doctor for not using the common name of the drug — paregoric.

PLEASE SEE CVS, PAGE B5

## CVS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B3

The suit says CVS failed to "utilize, test and maintain" computer software capable of alerting employees to the dangers of confus-

## SOUTHLINGTON

ing the two medications. Also, the suit says, the company failed to implement or enforce a system of checking for misfills.

hiring insufficiently competent and experienced personnel. It contends that Vecchio failed to exercise a "degree of care and skill recognized as acceptable and appropriate," which included possibly ignoring a high dosage alert on the computer and failing to confer with a drug information resource center or text to familiarize herself with the medications.

The state Commission on Pharmacy is responsible for any disciplinary action against Vecchio and is currently investigating the incident. A separate criminal investigation is being conducted by

## TOWN NEWS

NEW BRITAIN • BRISTOL • BERLIN • PLAINVILLE • SOUTHINGTON

## Sons Sue Pharmacy In Mother's Death

By LORETTA WALDMAN  
COURANT STAFF WRITER

The sons of a Southington woman who died last June because of a botched prescription are suing CVS and the pharmacist who dispensed the ultimately lethal medication.

## SOUTHINGTON

The complaint, served to the defendants Wednesday, contends that "pharmaceutical negligence and wanton and

reckless misconduct" on the part of CVS Pharmacy Inc. and Shylow Vecchio, the pharmacist who filled Donna Marie Altieri's prescription, contributed to the fatal mistake.

To be filed in New Britain Superior Court on behalf of Daren and Derek Altieri by Watertown attorney Michael D'Amico, the suit seeks monetary and punitive damages in excess of \$15,000.

In a prepared statement, unnamed corporate officials at CVS extended their sympathies and condolences to the Altieri family, but declined to comment further.

"Because CVS has been named in a lawsuit in relation to this matter, it would be inappropriate for us to make any further statements," the release said.

Daren and Derek Altieri have said the suit is part of a multi-pronged strategy intended to expose and prevent prescription errors at CVS and elsewhere. The brothers, 29 and 32, also are seeking regulatory changes that include mandating the reporting of prescription errors to the state Department of Consumer Protection.

Angered by the way that agency, the

state Commission on Pharmacy and CVS have handled the mistake that killed their mother, the brothers have said they decided to publicize her story earlier this month.

Donna Marie Altieri, 51, walked into the CVS Pharmacy at 310 Main St., Southington, on June 14, 2001. She carried a prescription for camphorated tincture of opium, or paregoric, from her Meriden physician, Dr. Jackson Maille for treatment of chronic diarrhea. Vecchio, 26, mistakenly filled the prescription with tincture of opium, a similar sounding, but far more potent diarrhea

remedy with 25 times the morphine.

The next day, soon after taking a teaspoon of the medication, Altieri became weak and complained of feeling tired and achy. Her condition quickly deteriorated, and by 6 p.m. she was dead. An autopsy determined the cause of death to be an overdose of morphine.

Woonsocket, R.I.-based CVS has acknowledged the mistake, but according to company documents, blames the doctor for not using the common name of the drug — paregoric.

PLEASE SEE CVS, PAGE B5

## CVS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B3

The suit says CVS failed to "utilize, test and maintain" computer software capable of alerting employees to the dangers of confus-

## SOUTHINGTON

ing the two medications. Also, the suit says, the company failed to implement or enforce a system of checking for misfills.

The suit also accuses CVS of

hiring insufficiently competent and experienced personnel. It contends that Vecchio failed to exercise a "degree of care and skill recognized as acceptable and appropriate," which included possibly ignoring a high dosage alert on the computer and failing to confer with a drug information resource center or text to familiarize herself with the medications.

The state Commission on Pharmacy is responsible for any disciplinary action against Vecchio and is currently investigating the incident. A separate criminal investigation is being conducted by Southington police.