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Georgia Jury Returns \$23.6 Million Verdict Against PruittHealth in Nursing Home Case

ATHENS, Ga. — A Georgia jury has returned a \$23.6 million verdict against PruittHealth and related entities in a nursing home case involving a beloved Fitzgerald baseball coach who twice tested positive for controlled medications that had not been prescribed to him.

[Evan Jones](#) of Athens-based Blasingame, Burch, Garrard & Ashley, P.C. and [Lance Lourie](#) of Cunningham Bounds Trial Attorneys served as lead trial counsel for the family. The verdict followed a trial in Gwinnett County State Court and years of litigation by attorneys and staff from both firms.

The jury awarded \$12.6 million to the coach's estate for his pain and suffering and \$11 million to his surviving family for the full value of his life. The longtime baseball coach from Fitzgerald, Georgia, was also a devoted father and grandfather.

During the trial, evidence showed that while the coach was a nursing home resident, he twice tested positive for morphine, lorazepam and hydrocodone, despite having no prescriptions for those medications. Evidence presented at trial showed that only nurses at the facility had access to the controlled medications.

The case also included evidence of chronic understaffing and the spoliation of surveillance video, as well as evidence that the facility's administrator attempted to conceal what had occurred. The facility's former medical director later became a principal witness at trial.

PruittHealth maintained throughout the litigation that the unauthorized administration of the medications either did not occur or, if it did, caused no harm or did not contribute to the coach's death.

The jury also found PruittHealth Inc. and United Health Services of Georgia Inc. responsible for the damages through findings of agency and “piercing the corporate veil,” a legal doctrine that can allow related corporate entities to be held liable despite their separate corporate structures.

Judgment was entered against PruittHealth-Fitzgerald LLC, PruittHealth Inc. and United Health Services of Georgia Inc. for the \$23.6 million verdict, plus court costs and interest.

"This case was about accountability for a beloved coach, father and grandfather whose family deserved answers about what happened to him," Jones said. "This verdict was the result of an extraordinary team effort. Lance and his team at Cunningham Bounds worked tirelessly alongside our team at BBGA, and we are deeply grateful for their partnership. Most importantly, we are grateful to the family for trusting all of us to tell his story and to the jury for its careful attention to the evidence."

Jones and Lourie credited the attorneys and staff from both firms whose work included preparing witnesses, organizing and analyzing extensive evidence, developing trial exhibits and demonstratives and managing the many details required to bring the case to trial.

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About Blasingame, Burch, Garrard & Ashley, P.C.

Blasingame, Burch, Garrard & Ashley, P.C. is a Georgia law firm with offices in Athens and Lake Oconee. The firm's attorneys represent individuals and families in nursing home abuse and neglect, medical malpractice, personal injury and wrongful death cases throughout Georgia.

About Cunningham Bounds Trial Attorneys

Cunningham Bounds Trial Attorneys is a nationally recognized trial firm representing plaintiffs in complex litigation, including personal injury, wrongful death and other significant civil matters.

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