

Report on Medicare Compliance Volume 27, Number 14. April 16, 2018 Hospital Settles EMTALA Pregnancy Case; OIG: 'Steady Flow' of Maternity-Related Cases

By Nina Youngstrom

An Ohio hospital has settled a civil monetary penalty case for allegedly violating the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) when a very pregnant woman showed up sick at the emergency room but wasn't adequately screened or appropriately transferred, according to the HHS Office of Inspector General. Her baby was born that day without a heartbeat at another hospital and died.

Paulding County Hospital in Ohio agreed to pay \$50,000 to resolve the alleged EMTALA violation, which centered on a woman who was 33 weeks pregnant when she presented at the emergency room, the settlement states. The woman complained of leaking fluids, pelvic pain and vomiting. An ER nurse took the woman to an examination room and told her the hospital didn't have an obstetrician on-site, but she could start treatment at the hospital and be transferred later, or "her male companion could drive her immediately to Van Wert County Hospital, where her obstetrician practiced." After hearing this, the pregnant woman left Paulding County Hospital in a private vehicle for the 30-minute drive to the other hospital, where she had an emergency C-section. She delivered a male infant without a heartbeat; "Van Wert's efforts to revive the infant were unsuccessful," the settlement states. The hospital didn't admit liability in the settlement. Its attorney did not respond to RMC's request for comment by press time.

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