

Report on Patient Privacy Volume 20, Number 8. August 06, 2020 Patient Privacy Court Case: August 2020

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The Pennsylvania Supreme Court, in a split decision, decided that mental health professionals have a duty to warn others of threats made by patients even if those threats are made toward an unspecified person. The case will now go to a jury.^[1]

This decision was prompted by a 2008 incident in which a patient stabbed and killed his 18-year-old neighbor with a pair of scissors. The victim's family filed a lawsuit against University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Presbyterian Shadyside, which is known as the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, claiming that the treatment facility and the treating physicians had a responsibility to tell the patient's neighbor of the threat, arguing that the victim would not have answered the door when the patient knocked if she had known.

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