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Doctor wins \$25 million verdict against CAMC

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CHARLESTON - A Charleston surgeon was awarded \$25 million by a jury Thursday after it ruled Charleston Area Medical Center damaged the doctor's reputation by wrongfully revoking his privileges.

After a two-week trial, the Kanawha County jury deliberated three hours before returning the verdict in favor of R.E. Hamrick that included \$5 million in compensatory damages and \$20 million in punitive damages. The jurors ruled CAMC's actions were "fraudulent, malicious and oppressive conduct"

Hamrick wanted to self-insure himself for medical malpractice coverage with \$1 million of his own money instead of going through an insurance company.

He sued CAMC in September 2004 after hospital officials took away his privileges to practice at the hospital, the second largest in the state. The surgeon's right to practice was reinstated by a Supreme Court order four days later.

"CAMC is extremely disappointed in the verdict and intends to appeal," CAMC spokesman Dale Witte told WSAZ.

A private practice surgeon, Hamrick had the \$1 million needed to put into an actuarially sound fund in order to qualify for the caps on non-economic damages passed in 2003's Medical Professional Liability Act. CAMC in 2006 adopted a policy that allowed physicians to insure themselves.

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