

Tuesday, November 20, 2012

# Jury Awards Record Damages to 94-Year Old Woman in Sexual Assault Elder Abuse Case

*\$12.5 million verdict by Chatsworth jury for 2007 assault at Oakdale Heights facility in Santa Clarita, California.*

VALENCIA, Calif., March 4 /PRNewswire/ -- Following a five-week trial, a jury in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Los Angeles, awarded 94-year old Sophie Schwartz \$12.5 million (\$6 million in general damages and \$6.5 million in punitive damages) on March 1, 2010 against Jose Vazquez and Oakdale Heights Management Corporation for the 2007 sexual assault committed while Schwartz resided at Oakdale Heights of Santa Clarita in Santa Clarita, California. The Honorable Judge Melvin D. Sandvig presided.

“This was a very emotional trial on many different levels,” stated Gregory Owen of Santa Clarita-based personal injury law firm Owen, Patterson & Owen who, along with wife and partner Susan Owen, represented Schwartz. “The jury sent a loud message to elder care providers who choose profit over people and ignore laws designed to protect our community’s most vulnerable members. This type of conduct will not be tolerated.”

The judgment represents one of the largest verdicts ever awarded for emotional trauma without evidence of physical injury. Schwartz, who suffers from dementia, was sexually assaulted in her room on December 16, 2007, by Vazquez, an illegal immigrant hired by Oakdale Heights Management Corporation as a dietary aid at the Oakdale Heights of Santa Clarita facility in April 2006. Vazquez was convicted in 2008 in a plea deal for attempted rape and is currently serving an eight-year sentence.

The jury found that the defendant corporation purposefully falsified employment documents at the time of Vazquez’s hiring and violated several California laws governing the care of dementia residents. Cost cutting measures, understaffing, and negligent hiring practices and supervision contributed to the elder neglect.

Vazquez had a master key allowing him access to every resident’s room despite the absence of a valid background check and no training for dealing with the elderly residents.

One of the corporate defendants is currently ranked the 28th largest operator of elder home facilities in the nation.

If you wish to obtain further information from Gregory Owen or Susan Owen, contact them directly at (661) 799-3899.

## **About Owen, Patterson & Owen**

Founded in 1977, Owen, Patterson & Owen is a national law firm specializing in personal injury cases serving people throughout the United States and based in Santa Clarita, California. Practice areas include, but are not limited to, auto, truck and motorcycle accidents, brain injuries, radiation overdose, medical malpractice, dangerous pharmaceuticals, carbon monoxide poisoning, spinal cord injuries, wrongful death, construction accidents, train accidents, amusement park accidents, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and wrongful termination. The firm was voted number one personal injury law firm by local citizens, included on the list of Super Lawyers published by Law and Politics and named one of the Top 25 lawyers by Valley Magazine. 866.654.4947 | [owenpatterson.com](http://owenpatterson.com)