

Bernie Mac's Wife Sues Dermatologist for Comedian's Wrongful Death

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson posted in [Wrongful Death](#)

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According to the Chicago Sun-Times, comedian Bernie Mac's wife has filed a [wrongful death](#) suit against a doctor who treated him less than a month before his death. Rhonda McCullough is suing dermatologist Rene Earles because he failed to recognize the symptoms of serious cardiopulmonary problems that should have sent Bernie Mac straight to a hospital.

McCullough is seeking a \$50,000 judgment against the dermatologist for contributing to Bernie Mac's death through negligence. The delay in treatment caused by Earles's failure to notice obvious symptoms of serious health problems, McCullough argues, contributed to complications, ultimately leading to Bernie Mac's death.

Bernie Mac died on August 9, 2008, at age 50, from complications related to pneumonia. He had chronic inflammatory lung disease.

He was most famous for his roles as Frank Catton in the Ocean's Eleven series, the title character in Mr. 3000, and as the star of The Bernie Mac Show, which earned him two Emmy Award nominations for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series.

Doctor Was Treating Bernie Mac for Inflammatory Lung Disease

Earles is a dermatologist, which is a medical doctor. Generally, any medical doctor has the responsibility to notice life-threatening symptoms of disease and either treat them or refer the patient for appropriate treatment.

In this case, Earles was treating Bernie Mac for skin lesions caused by the comedian's inflammatory lung disease. According to McCullough's lawsuit, Bernie Mac's abnormal vital signs and unusual weakness should have signaled to Earles that he needed immediate hospitalization.

Earles "failed to recognize cardiopulmonary instability in Bernie" and "failed to recognize and act upon abnormal vital signs and signs of respiratory failure," according to the complaint in the wrongful death lawsuit.

Earles denies the allegations that his negligence contributed to Bernie Mac's death. He says that he provided treatment for the skin lesions and, when Bernie Mac showed signs of weakness, he had the patient sleep for a few hours.

Later, Earles realized that Bernie Mac had been diagnosed with pneumonia in both lungs. At that point, he instructed Mac to go to the hospital, he says.

"It was entirely devastating. Look, Bernie was my patient. Bernie was my friend. We became extremely close -- we were like brothers," he told the Chicago Sun-Times.

Related Resources:

- ["Bernie Mac's Wife Sues Doctor for Comedian's Wrongful Death"](#) (Fox 5 Atlanta, August 6, 2010)
- "Bernie Mac" (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)