

Hospital hit for \$32M in bungled-birth case

By LAURA ITALIANO

A Manhattan jury yesterday slapped Mount Sinai Medical Center with a \$32.2-million malpractice verdict, finding the hospital botched the birth of a brain-damaged boy.

"This is for our son," Jonathan Greenhill, father of 6-year-old Alexander, said after the verdict.

"He's a wonderful little boy, and this is important for him," Greenhill said of the award by the eight-woman, one-man jury. "This is for his well being, and for his future."

Lawyers for the Greenhills, who live in the Westchester County town of Mamaroneck, had accused the hospital in Manhattan Supreme Court of not only depriving the boy of oxygen during his birth, but trying to cover up by destroying evidence of the mistakes.

"We subpoenaed the person in charge of keeping the [fetal monitoring] tapes to testify" before the jury, said family lawyer Thomas Moore.

"She testified that she was ordered to have the originals de-

"[A hospital employee] testified that she was ordered to have the originals [of fetal monitoring tapes] destroyed."

PLAINTIFFS LAWYER
THOMAS MOORE

stroyed," he said, adding that the hospital also prepared false summaries of CAT scans and MRIs to make it look as if the boy's problems did not result from doctor error.

A spokeswoman, who said the hospital would seek to have the award reduced next month, insisted the boy and his mother "were provided with the best possi-

ble care."

"Despite appropriate care, premature infants may sustain significant injury," said spokeswoman Joan Lebow.

Alexander was born in March 1994, a month premature. He weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces, Moore said, adding that he has cerebral palsy, is borderline mentally retarded, and suffers diminished vision and fine motor skills — like those needed for dressing and feeding himself.

He'll need a lifetime of therapy and care, the lawyer said.

The hospital made several key errors when Alexander began suffering oxygen deprivation after his mother, Elena, went into premature labor March 23, Moore said.

Doctors failed to rescue the baby by performing an emergency Cesarean, he said. Instead, they augmented the problem by administering drugs to induce labor and reduce pain.

The labor-inducing drug Pitocin increased Elena's contractions, further constricting the baby's oxygen supply. Meanwhile, a drug injection for Elena's pain caused her blood pressure to plummet, again lowering the oxygen supply.

"The doctors, in effect, were suffocating little Alexander," the lawyer said.

He said the hospital turned down the family's offer to settle the case for only \$4 million.