

Family wins 32M for hosp birth trauma

By RALPH R. ORTEGA
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The parents of a baby who was suffocating during labor and sustained brain damage were awarded \$32.2 million in a lawsuit against Mount Sinai Medical Center, an attorney said yesterday.

Alexander Greenhill, now 6, has not been able to live a normal life and never will, said his lawyer, Thomas Moore of Manhattan.

The boy suffers from significant physical and learning disabilities, Moore said.

Moore said Alexander's parents, Elena and Jonathan Greenhill of Mamaroneck, Westchester, were relieved by the nine-member jury's verdict in Manhattan Superior Court on Monday.

"This has been a long and difficult road for them," Moore said.

The \$32.2 million will help Alexander "have the resources to take care of many, many needs that he has now and will have for the rest of his life," he added.

Joan Lebow, a Mount Sinai spokeswoman, said the Manhattan hospital would go before Superior Court Judge Ira Gamerman on Tuesday to ask for a reduction in the award.

"And that reduction will be significant," Lebow said.

The hospital also stood by its doctors and support staff, contending that Alexander "and his mother were provided with the best possible care."

Despite that care, "premature infants may sustain significant injury," Lebow said, reading from a statement.

Alexander was 7 pounds, 10 ounces, when his mother went into early labor at 34½ weeks. He was in fetal distress because of oxygen deprivation, Moore said.

He contended Mount Sinai contributed to Alexander's condition when doctors insisted on a natural delivery instead of a Caesarean.

The mother was administered Pitocin, a labor-inducing drug, and an epidural to ease her pain from contractions.

Both, however, are known to reduce oxygen flow to the fetus, Moore argued before a jury of eight women and one man.

In addition, Alexander was pounded into his mother's pelvic bone "like a battering ram," because his head was too large, Moore said.

The lawyer also alleged that Mount Sinai tried to cover up a botched delivery.

Original tapes of Alexander's delivery were destroyed immediately after the boy's birth, and written reports of imaging tests did not match the films, he said.

The hospital would not comment on the charges.

Moore said the hospital rejected a pretrial offer he made to settle the case for \$4 million. The hospital reversed course during the trial, but by then it was too late to negotiate a settlement, Moore said.