

GNRC Hospital Held Liable for Medical Negligence Leading to Significant Disability



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AT News 16 May 2025 19715 views

In a landmark judgment, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has held Guwahati Neurological Research Centre (GNRC) Hospital and three of its doctors liable for gross medical negligence, resulting in severe and permanent disability to Takam James, a young man from Arunachal Pradesh.

The complaint (Consumer Complaint No. 581 of 2014) was filed against Dr. Navanil Barua, Dr. Bivan Bihari Dey, and Dr. Monoj Agarwal, who were accused of negligent treatment following a motorbike accident that left Mr. James with severe brain injuries. During his treatment at GNRC, multiple procedural lapses occurred, including an undocumented and improperly conducted tracheostomy that ultimately led to irreparable damage to his vocal cords and the need for a permanent tracheostomy.

The Commission, in its verdict, unequivocally found that “the negligence in providing medical treatment... is manifest in the form of compliance with obtaining informed consent, providing medical treatment of requisite standards, [and] providing necessary information, guidance and support to the complainant.”

In light of the findings, the NCDRC ordered all three doctors to jointly and severally pay a compensation of ₹20,00,000 to the complainant within one month. An additional ₹50,000 was awarded as litigation costs. The Commission warned that failure to comply within the stipulated time would attract an interest rate of 12% per annum on the awarded compensation.

The judgment also highlighted the systemic issues in GNRC’s handling of the case, noting that “most medical records from GNRC lacked names, qualifications, and registration numbers of the doctors,” a violation of professional regulations. The Commission further condemned the “serious ethical violations and procedural lapses,” particularly the failure to provide proper informed consent and documentation for invasive procedures.

In a powerful rebuke of the hospital’s defense, the Commission cited expert medical testimony stating, “The management of the patient’s airway at GNRC, Guwahati was negligent... not to recognize and appropriately investigate the complication... indicates either ignorance or incompetence or both.”

This decision is a significant affirmation of patient rights and medical accountability in India. It serves as a reminder that hospitals and doctors must adhere to the highest standards of care and transparency, and that victims of medical negligence have recourse through legal and consumer protection channels.

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