

Georgia woman wins \$70M verdict after legs amputated

Albany doctors said they complied with the standard of care and caused no harm.



A South Georgia woman has won a \$70 million verdict in her medical malpractice case against several Albany doctors and their medical practices, after both her legs were amputated following treatment at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in 2013. (Getty Images)

By [Rosie Manins](#)

A jury in South Georgia has awarded \$70 million to a Camilla woman who says she lost both her legs above the knee because doctors gave her a medication overdose and botched her care, court filings show.

Lawyers for Jessica Powell said it took jurors in Dougherty County just over 30 minutes to rule in her favor against three Albany doctors and their medical practices after hearing two and a half weeks' worth of evidence.

"That should tell you everything you need to know about who was right," said Matt Cook, a lead attorney for Powell.



Credit: Courtesy Jessica Powell

Jessica Powell was a preschool teacher in Camilla, Georgia, in 2013 when her legs were amputated above the knee following hospital treatment. On April 23, 2025, a jury in Dougherty County awarded Powell \$70 million in her medical malpractice case against three Albany doctors and their medical practices.

The verdict, reached April 23, blames doctors Joe Morgan, James Palazzolo and Thomas Ungarino as well as Albany Pulmonary and Critical Care Associates and Albany Vascular Specialist Center.

Attorneys for the doctors and companies issued a statement Wednesday, citing the “tragic and highly complex medical emergency” Powell faced. They commended Powell’s lawyers and said the judge ensured a fair trial.

“The physicians acted appropriately under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and we respectfully disagree with the jury’s verdict and any notion that these respected physicians failed to meet the standard of care,” the defense attorneys said. “Unfortunately, the resulting bilateral above-the-knee amputations, while devastating, were an unavoidable consequence of the life-saving treatment provided.”

In case filings, all the defendants denied wrongdoing, saying they complied with the standard of care and caused no harm.

“The care and treatment Ms. Powell received at Phoebe (Putney Memorial Hospital) from Dr. Palazzolo and others was necessary to save her life and preserve the function of her brain and other vital organs,” Palazzolo said in his outline of the case, filed in September.

The 12 jurors assigned no fault to the hospital, which was not a defendant at the time of trial. Case records show the hospital settled Powell’s claims against it before trial.

Powell’s lawyers said the doctors and their practices have fought her claims for more than a decade. They said the verdict is one of the largest awarded in Georgia in a medical malpractice case.

“The verdict came as no surprise because we knew from Day One that our client was clearly mistreated by her physicians,” Cook said. “What drove the result was just the repeated denials and unwillingness to accept responsibility in the face of overwhelming evidence of wrongdoing.”

Powell, 40, was 28 when she was hospitalized in March 2013 after collapsing at home due to a stomach virus and hormone deficiency disease, case records show. She was diagnosed with sepsis and shock and given drugs to raise her critically low blood pressure.

Powell alleged she was given the drug Vasopressin at a dose two and a half times the usual maximum dose for more than 40 hours, significantly restricting blood flow to her lower legs and feet. She claimed Morgan, a vascular surgeon in Albany, then flubbed her care when called to address any complications as the medication was withdrawn and blood flow was restored.

Both Powell’s legs were amputated above the knee.

In his case summary, Ungarino said Powell’s lower limbs were irreversibly injured before she was admitted to the hospital in a critical condition.

Shane Lazenby, another lead attorney for Powell, said the defendants argued throughout the case that they intended to give Powell the treatment she received.

“Instead of embracing their mistake, which probably would have resonated with the jury, they denied it and said, ‘We meant to administer the care this way,’” Lazenby said. “Jessica and her sisters are just great people and I think the jury connected with them because they’re just good folks.”

Powell was working as a preschool teacher when her legs were amputated. She is now a private tutor.

The jury assigned 50% fault to Morgan and Albany Vascular Specialist Center and 50% fault to Palazzolo, Ungarino and Albany Pulmonary and Critical Care Associates, according to the verdict form in the case.