

Connecticut Lawyer Koskoff Questions Medical Witnesses In Michael Jackson Trial

By Karen Ali

Under questioning by Connecticut personal injury lawyer Michael Koskoff, a medical doctor testified in a Los Angeles courtroom that the target of the Michael Jackson family lawsuit - concert promoter AEG Live Inc. - should never have hired Dr. Conrad Murray as Jackson's doctor.

"Because Murray's contract with AEG ended if the Jackson tour was cancelled, the contract with AEG encouraged Murray to take risks", Koskoff said in an interview with the Law Tribune after court.

Testifying Wednesday in a Los Angeles courtroom, Daniel Wohlgelernter, an interventional cardiologist, who has the same training as Murray, said that Murray violated the standard of care for cardiologists by administering the drug Propofol, Koskoff said.

Wohlgelernter testified that Propofol should never be given in a home setting without CPR equipment and backup personnel on hand.

Koskoff and other lawyers from his firm Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder were asked by the Jackson's attorney to help them out with the medical aspects of the case.

The plaintiffs are arguing that AEG was negligent in hiring and supervising Murray, who was supposed to be caring for Jackson, and that he gave Jackson the fatal dose of Propofol, a surgical anesthetic.

Murray was convicted in 2011 after a criminal trial and is serving a 4-year term for his role in giving Jackson the fatal drugs.

Wohlgelernter also testified that Murray treated Jackson's medical emergency as a cardiac event, when it was a respiratory problem. "It was just a totally inept response," Koskoff said.

Wohlgelernter testified that Murray delayed in calling 911 and that it was not appropriate for Murray to give him CPR on the bed, which he did. He should have given it to him on the floor,

he testified.

Wohlgelernter also testified that it was not appropriate for AEG to hire Murray as Jackson's doctor. "He was in the wrong specialty. Michael had no heart problems," Koskoff said. "Second, he testified that there should have been red flags about the deal."

He testified that Murray accepted a deal to be Jackson's doctor, was willing to abandon all of his cardiac patients on 10 days notice to travel on the road with Jackson. He took this with the understanding that the deal could be cancelled at any time if the concerts were postponed, he testified. "What kind of doctor would do this?" Koskoff asked.

AEG should have realized he wasn't the right doctor especially because it was well known that Jackson had a prescription drug dependency problem.

"In that context the fact that Jackson recommended him should have been a red flag that he would break the rules and do whatever it took to get Jackson on the stage regardless of the risks to his patient," Koskoff said.

Also testifying this week was plaintiff's witness Mr. Daniel Anderson, a criminologist and toxicologist, who testified that the levels of the drug Propofol found in Michael Jackson's body were levels found during the administration of general anesthesia in a hospital setting, Koskoff said.

Anderson also testified that intravenous lorazepam was administered to Jackson by Dr. Murray.

Anderson told jurors "how highly unusual it was to find in a home situation," Koskoff said.

Dr. Christopher Rogers, the state's Deputy Medical Examiner, also testified Monday that Dr. Murray administered Propofol and lorazepam, which were the cause of Jackson's death, but it was the Propofol that primarily caused the death.

Dr. Rogers testified that the Propofol was used in this case as a sleep medicine. "Propofol should never be used as a sleep medicine," Koskoff said.

"The only people using it as a sleep medicine are medical personnel - who have access to the drug - and who are abusing it," Koskoff said, explaining Rogers testimony.

"Rogers testified that aside from his death, the physical condition of his organs was good," Koskoff said.

Rogers told jurors that Jackson exhibited no signs of self-administration of drugs, Koskoff said. "That's important because there is an issue of drug dependency."

The witness list at the trial, which is expected to last several months, includes Sharon Osborne, Diana Ross and Jackson family members.