

Lawsuit: St. Joseph's Hospital mold killed three children

By Colleen Jenkins, SP Times
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TAMPA — Three pediatric oncology patients died within a month of one another at St. Joseph's Hospital last spring.

According to a lawsuit filed today, cancer didn't kill them.

Instead, says attorney Steve Yerrid, the children were exposed to mold released during a construction project at the hospital. The mold caused fatal infections, the lawsuit said.

A hospital spokeswoman was unable to immediately respond to the allegations.

The court document details the sad fates of the three children.

Mathew Gliddon died April 16 at age 5. The child suffered from acute lymphoblastic leukemia. A pathologist said he died as the result of chemotherapy and fungi infection, the lawsuit said.

Sierra Kesler died May 3 at age 9. Her cause of death was listed as fungal pneumonia with underlying acute lymphoblastic leukemia, according to the lawsuit.

Kaylie Gunn-Rimes died May 13 at age 2. She had been off chemotherapy and was cancer-free for six months before her death, the lawsuit said. But after being exposed to mold, she developed a massive fungal infection in her lungs that killed her, the suit said.

Yerrid spoke on behalf of the families today.

"They know that the system can never bring back their children," he said. "But they know that the system can deliver safety for other children."

The attorney could not say if there were other

victims.

The lawsuit says the hospital failed to properly protect the young patients during the renovation work and contends that officials should have known it would generate moderate to high levels of dust.

"There are simple protocols that should and could have been followed," Yerrid said.

Fla. senator says courthouse sickened him

UPI

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., says just touring the troubled Sam M. Gibbons Federal Courthouse in Tampa left him feeling ill from mold and mildew exposure.

This is totally unacceptable, Nelson said, adding that he plans to raise Cain until the U.S. General Services Administration fixes the problems with the building.

The 12-year-old, 363,000-square-foot courthouse has been diagnosed with sick-building syndrome. Employees in the \$81-million, glass-and-limestone building have

been found three times more likely to have adult-onset asthma and other respiratory ailments than other federal workers, The Tampa (Fla.) Tribune reported Tuesday.

Employees complain that shoddy construction has left the building with leaking windows and roofs, mold has taken over many areas, rugs have been pulled up from water damage and wood floors are peeling back.

Nelson was called in after repair projects, started a year ago, hit a snag between the contractor hired to fix the leaks and the General Services Administration.



U.S. Senator Bill Nelson — former astronaut and former Insurance Commissioner — is a very cool guy with a wonderful family.