

Scenario 3

An orthopedic surgeon, Dr. John Park, and an operating room nurse who is scrubbed, Ms. Candy Lane, are speaking as Dr. Park places bone screws in the spine of a patient undergoing a lumbar fusion. Dr. Raphael Sittipong is doing the anesthesia.

Dr. Park: Let's use that new bone growth-promoting glue to help hold these next few screws and bone graft in place.

Ms. Lane: Dr. Park, we've not used that new glue yet. It just arrived and we haven't had an in-service on it yet.

Dr. Park: So? Please get it and let's get going. I have used it a hundred times over at Memorial Hospital. There's nothing to it.

Ms. Lane: No, I'd prefer to not use it. We don't know anything about it here and I've heard that there are problems with using it.

Dr. Park: That's baloney. There are no risks. I've never had a problem with it and neither have any of my colleagues.

Ms. Lane: Well, that doesn't matter. We can't use it until we've been trained with it.

Dr. Park: It's in a stupid sterile squeeze tube. All you have to do is hand it to me.

Ms. Lane: No. Use something else.

Dr. Park: Get your supervisor in here. Raphael, what's wrong with Candy today? She's really being a pain in the butt.

Dr. Sittipong: John, I don't know what's going on with her. Candy, what's your problem today?

Ms. Lane: Nothing's wrong with me! And you're both way out of line. Dr. Park, you are the most disrespectful person I've ever met. And you don't care about your patients, either.

Dr. Park: Get your supervisor in here. I don't want you scrubbing this case and I don't want to work with you again.

Dr. Sittipong: John, hold on. OK, you both need to back up and take a deep breath. We need a reset here.

Dr. Park: Raphael, don't you go off on me, too! All I did was ask for some bone glue and Lisa goes nuclear on me.

Ms. Lane: You never listen to anyone. All you want is to boss people around and make money. I'll never work with you again.

Dr. Sittipong: Easy, easy. Let's start again. And let's make sure this patient does OK. Lisa, what was the initial problem?

Outcome: The case proceeded and the "glue" subsequently was used. Despite what was apparently a successful lumbar fusion, the patient continued to have back and radiating leg pain. One year later, the glue and its manufacturer were broadly noted in a series of newspaper articles as having been potentially inappropriately tested and used in off-label situations by a number of spine surgeons. According to these reports and subsequent disclosures by the FDA and the product's manufacturer, some patients who received this bone growth-promoting glue have developed remote bone growth, increased radicular pain, autoimmune symptoms, and potentially promotion of cancers. On the third postoperative year, this patient developed an adenocarcinoma of the large bowel.

At this time, the patient has filed a lawsuit against the surgeon, the hospital, and the product's manufacturer.