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## **CELEBRITIES AND MEDICAL MALPRACTICE**

### **John Ritter**

In March 2006, the wife and four children of actor John Ritter, who died in 2003 at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, California, reached a settlement with the hospital for his death. The family alleged that doctors misdiagnosed his condition as a heart attack and failed to provide proper treatment for the tear in his aorta, which led to his death. Ritter was best known for his role as Jack Tripper on the sitcom "Three's Company." "John Ritter Wrongful Death Lawsuit Settled," *Associated Press*, March 15, 2006; Robert Welkos, "John Ritter's Family Files Lawsuit Against Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 2004.

### **Dick Schaap**

Dick Schaap, legendary sports writer and broadcaster, went in for a routine hip replacement surgery at the prestigious Lenox Hill hospital in New York in 2001. Schaap contracted an infection at the hospital and died three months later at the age of 67. After Schaap's death, his widow Trish said, "I'm so angry because Dick did his--any job that he did, he did very well. He did them to the best of his ability. He didn't leave stones unturned. And all those doctors had to do--they didn't have to be brilliant or geniuses. All they had to do was do their job the way Dick always did his. It's devastating that this is the way he had to die." The Schaap family filed a lawsuit and the jury found the doctors negligent in their care for Schaap and awarded the family \$1.9 million. *The Early Show: Getting Sick at the Hospital* (CBS television broadcast, Oct. 27, 2003); *Primetime Live: What Killed Dick Schaap?* (ABC television broadcast, Oct. 23, 2003); Helen Peterson, "Doc To Pay 1.9m In Schaap Death," *NY Daily News*, July 2, 2005.

### **Dana Carvey**

Dana Carvey sued his heart surgeon for operating on the wrong artery when he underwent a double bypass in 1998. The doctor settled for an undisclosed amount, which Carvey donated to charity. Carvey said, "This lawsuit, from the beginning, was about accountability and doing everything I could to make sure that it wouldn't happen to someone else." His publicist said that Carvey "has been given a clean bill of health." Judith Michaelson, "Arts and Entertainment Report," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2000.

**Julie Andrews**

Julie Andrews underwent surgery in 1997 to remove non-cancerous nodules in her throat. The surgery ended her singing career. She filed a lawsuit claiming she had not been told “the operation carried the risk of permanent hoarseness, ‘irreversible loss of vocal quality’ or other complications that might leave her unable to sing.” It also accused the doctor of operating on both sides of her vocal cord when there was no reason to do anything to the right side. The doctor settled the case in 2000. Neil Macfarquhar & Julian Barnes, “Public Lives,” *New York Times*, September 7, 2000; James Barron, “Julie Andrews Sues Throat Surgeon,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1999.

**Freddie Prinze**

The family of the “Chico and the Man” TV actor, who committed suicide by gunshot at age 22, sued Prinze’s psychiatrist for malpractice. The family alleged that the doctor “first took away and then returned the .32-caliber pistol with which Prinze shot himself.” The doctor denied wrongdoing but settled the case. Myrna Oliver, “W. S. Kroger; Pioneer in Use of Hypnosis,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1995.

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