

## FORMER INMATE'S SUIT AGAINST BROWARD SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND ARMOR CORRECTIONAL HEALTH OVER DENIAL OF AIDS DRUGS HEADS FOR FEDERAL COURT

### Abstract

In a Miami federal courtroom, US District Judge Alan Gold will today hear arguments in a lawsuit alleging that the Broward Sheriff's Office and its prison health care provider withheld HIV drugs from an inmate with the virus. The months-long delay in treatment caused Richard Hardwick's HIV infection to progress to AIDS, his civil suit says. Hardwick, of Deerfield Beach, was arrested in March 2007. He pleaded no contest to prescription drug-related charges and driving with a revoked license, after which he completed six months in a residential drug treatment program. Hardwick was diagnosed with HIV in the mid-1980s and, his lawsuit says, began requesting HIV treatment within two days of his arrest. Greg Lauer and Dion Cassata, his attorneys, contend the Sheriff's Office and medical provider Armor Correctional Health Services denied treatment to Hardwick and other inmates with HIV as a cost-saving measure. They cite records showing that Armor spent an average of \$18.52 per day per inmate with HIV/AIDS in 2006 but only \$13.26 per day per inmate in 2007. Armor's lawyers contend that newer, cheaper drugs - not a decline in care - led to the reduced expenses. In their response to the lawsuit, which was filed last year, defense attorneys also argue it would have been irresponsible to start Hardwick on the drug cocktail while in custody because he might not have adhered to treatment once released. If Gold rejects the defense argument, the suit will head for a jury trial next month. The Broward jail system takes in some 68,000 inmates each year, of whom about 3 percent have HIV/AIDS. The Sheriff's Office has a \$20 million annual contract with Armor.

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