

Media Mention: 'Medical examiner ordered to pay \$350K for bungled death investigation'

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North Carolina Lawyers Weekly reported that a commissioner with the North Carolina Industrial Commission recently ordered the medical examiner's office and the state Department of Health and Human Services to pay damages to Shannon Santimore, whose husband's accidental death was misclassified as a suicide. Reporter Philip Bantz also covered Administrative Law Judge Randall May's recent order overturning the medical examiner's manner of death determination following a trial, the second time in as many years that May has reversed the

chief medical examiner's findings in a death investigation. Ward and Smith attorneys Charles Ellis and Hayley Wells represented the families in the Santimore and Tuggle cases. The full article can be accessed with a Lawyers Weekly subscription [here](#).

The state's chief medical examiner's office has been ordered to pay more than \$350,000 in damages to a widow whose husband's accidental death was misclassified as a suicide, according to a judge's ruling. Shannon Santimore argued that the medical examiner's bungling of her husband's manner of death investigation caused her "severe emotional distress," said her attorney, Hayley Wells of Ward and Smith in Asheville. "When the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner accepts jurisdiction, it is required by statute to conduct an investigation before assigning a manner of death," she added. "When it fails to do so, as it certainly failed to do in this case, the financial and emotional impact on family members is significant."