Reference Shelf Continued

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Plaintiff's son, a 28 year old mentally retarded man, was a patient at a state mental facility. While walking on the hospital grounds, the son was struck and killed by an automobile driven by a hospital employee. Plaintiff sued the state, among others, alleging that the state had knowledge, through its security guard, that the son routinely walked on the hospital grounds, and that therefore the state had a duty to take preventive measures to avoid the patient's being struck by an automobile. Based upon this reasoning, the lower court found in favor of the plaintiff. The court rejected the state's argument that the victim was contributorily negligent, stating that it was reasonable for the victim to walk on the hospital grounds on the date of the accident, since he was routinely allowed to do so. The Court of Appeals affirmed the decision of the lower court, stating that the hospital has a duty to protect the patient from dangers that may result from the patient's physical and mental incapacities as well as from external circumstances peculiarly within the hospital's control.

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