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# Plastic surgeon loses lawsuit on implants

By Timothy Hurley
ADVERTISER MAUI COUNTY BUREAU

WAILUKU, Maui — A Maui Circuit Court jury yesterday ordered a plastic surgeon to pay $864,500 in damages to a former patient for improperly performing breast surgery and then falsifying records about the operation.

The punitive damages against Dr. Larry Schlesinger, who has offices on O'ahu, the Big Island and Maui, included $189,000 for his conduct up to the surgery on Maui on Sept. 29, 1997, and $378,000 for his conduct afterward.

Maui resident Sharon Johnston, a former professional bodybuilder and Ms. Olympia contestant who has been a fitness trainer for celebrities such as Sophia Loren, Tom Arnold and Donna Summer, told the jury she hired Schlesinger to improve implants received on the Mainland in 1988. But instead of placing the implants under the muscle, as agreed, Schlesinger put them on top.

**SCHLESINGER:** State Physician of Year in 2000

Schlesinger testified that Johnston agreed to the change right before the surgery, and couldn't remember the conversation because she had taken a drug that caused retrograde amnesia. Two of his nurses testified that the patient had agreed to the

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# Surgeon: Jury sides with ex-bodybuilder

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change.

The four-week trial included testimony from two former employees of the physician, who said Schlesinger routinely changed records and put difficult cases in a "problem file" that he kept under lock and key.

Schlesinger countered that those witnesses were disgruntled former employees.

Although attorney Michael Green asked the jury for a $1.6 million award, he said he was satisfied with the verdict.

"We think it sends a message that the patient does have a right to control her body. And if you falsify patients' records, you better be prepared to pay," said Denise Sangster, an attorney who worked with Green on the case.

Schlesinger, who has performed more than 9,500 plastic surgery procedures in a career of more than 20 years, was the Hawai'i Medical Association's Physician of the Year in 2000.

It is likely he will appeal the judgment. His attorney, George Playdon of Honolulu, could not be reached for comment.