

8 MS. LEE: Hello, my name is Theresa Lee, as
 9 you know. It took me 14 years to get here, and I'm at
 10 a loss for words. I don't know how to do this.

11 You know, actually, a good life when you are
 12 healthy, you know, your life can just speak for
 13 itself, and pain and suffering sometimes can cause a
 14 terrible, terrible -- I don't know, it leads people to
 15 suicide.

16 I'm here today to talk about what I found out
 17 can happen when you walk into a hospital and you put
 18 your life into the hands of a doctor. They can leave
 19 you financially and physically in ruin.

20 I went in one morning to deliver a
 21 six-pound-nine-and-a-half-ounce baby boy. My son was
 22 okay, but I wasn't. My sphincter muscle up inside my
 23 rectum had been so severely torn. And the doctors,
 24 for fear of retribution, didn't tell me this.
 25 Instead, they led me down this path of seemingly

1 insurmountable pain and suffering, letting me believe
 2 that this was all mental when, in fact, I had a very
 3 badly torn sphincter muscle.

4 I ended up with a colostomy. How many of you
 5 know what a colostomy is? So you're aware of that.
 6 When you have to live with one of these things -- I
 7 was 32 years old when this happened. When you have to
 8 live this way, it completely changes your entire life.

9 And I'm still alive. You know what? I'm
 10 still alive. My anger is what brought me here today
 11 because I don't believe that what happened should ever
 12 happen ever again.

13 I had a baby. Women do not end up with
 14 colostomies because some doctor didn't know what he
 15 was doing. And, actually, you know what? I had a
 16 speech prepared, and it was going to be eloquent, and
 17 I'll tell you what, I'm just going to tell you from
 18 the heart.

19 Something is very wrong with our medical

20 community. It is a very lucrative business, and
21 people's lives are being left in ruin.
22 Why? I'll tell you why. Because I think
23 doctors are not paying attention. They're not
24 listening. If they would listen to what the people
25 are saying, they will take -- they will understand

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1 that they are human. We are human. They are not
2 perfect, they are not infallible. They do make
3 mistakes. And you know what, if they correct their
4 mistakes you wouldn't have people like me standing
5 here today talking about what's going on. And that's
6 about all I've got to say.

7 DR. SIMMER: Questions?

8 I have a question related to what you
9 experienced in terms of the willingness of the
10 physicians to talk about it, to talk about the events
11 after they had occurred.

12 In other words, it's -- you went through this
13 medical experience and then you said that the doctors
14 weren't listening.

15 MS. LEE: Right. The doctors led me down --
16 I mean, I went through a series of medical tests, and
17 they led me to believe that I was mentally
18 incompetent, that this was all a mental problem,
19 because of fear of retribution.

20 They knew I had a tear in my rectum but they
21 were so afraid to tell me because they were so afraid
22 I was going to sue them. If they would have told me,
23 we could have corrected the problem right then and
24 there, but they didn't do that. They led me on to
25 believe that this was just something that I had

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1 created, and that's the sad thing, because if they
2 would have known my character and known that I was a
3 person, just let's fix it. Don't be afraid that I'm
4 going to sue you and take you for everything that
5 you've got. I don't want your money. If you can fix

6 me, put me back together.
7 I've been through nine surgical procedures,
8 eight of them within the past 14 years, three of them
9 I have almost died on. And it's amazing that I am
10 alive. I'm beginning to believe that there is a
11 reason why I am still here because I should have been
12 dead.

13 And I will tell you, I was eight years old
14 and I almost died because I was hit by a truck. I had
15 a blood clot to the brain. A team of doctors saved my
16 life but then 24 years later a team of doctors almost
17 killed me.

18 And I've got heart problems now. Two of my
19 valves no longer work and my health is going. I might
20 look good. In my clothes I might look like I'm okay
21 but you have no idea what's going on in the inside of
22 me.

23 And I think that if doctors were to just
24 listen, listen, they could really do wonders for
25 people. Isn't that what this is all about? They're

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1 supposed to be helping people, not destroying lives.

2 So you're hearing from a patient's
3 perspective, from the other side. You're not hearing
4 from a doctor, you're hearing from me, and they left
5 me financially and physically in ruin. And if -- if
6 what I've paid for with my life will prevent this from
7 happening again, then it's great. It's good.

8 MS. McCOSKY: Just I'm wondering if you have
9 a recommendation that you can offer us. And what I'm
10 hearing from you now is that the recommendation might
11 be if better listening had taken place. Is that a
12 recommendation you can offer to avoid this? Is
13 that...

14 MS. LEE: During the delivery, I don't think
15 that any woman should be denied ice chips, okay,
16 especially during shift change. Doctors, if they
17 would have been there and paid attention to it, they
18 were just worried about -- it was during a shift

19 change and they left me, they just left me hanging
20 there. And when a woman ends up and she has not got
21 control of her bowels after a delivery, is it that
22 inconceivable for a doctor to, like, look at it and
23 go, well, wait a minute, she's never had this big
24 problem before, now all of a sudden she's got a
25 problem. Look into it. Pay attention, and they're

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1 not doing that.
2 Are we done?
3 DR. SIMMER: Questions? We have another
4 question.
5 MS. McDONALD: Only that listening, and I
6 think there has been a lot of effort made in medical
7 schools and other areas to sort of improve
8 communications between patients and doctors now.
9 Obviously, it doesn't get to everybody and people have
10 different communication skills and so on, but it seems
11 to me that's the big point that you want to make
12 today, is that had you and the doctors been able to
13 communicate, some of this could have been avoided and
14 it has to happen soon enough.
15 I mean, see, one of the things I'm about is
16 partnering here. And had you been able to partner
17 some and exchange what was happening and there was --
18 and there would be a system that was not as punitive
19 so that everybody was afraid to talk. You are not the
20 first patient to come forward who said I tried to talk
21 to somebody and the sort of system shut down; I
22 couldn't talk to anybody. And then you can begin to
23 feel that you're losing it. You're the one that is
24 sort of losing it.
25 And all I can say -- I feel like I have to

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1 say something. You have been through a lot. But that
2 I think there are -- it's not an excuse, but I think
3 there are some efforts being made to improve
4 communications.

5 MS. LEE: I don't see that.
6 MS. McDONALD: Oh, you don't see that?
7 MS. LEE: I absolutely do not see that
8 happening within our medical community. People are
9 ran through the system like they're on a machine, and
10 doctors do not sit down -- if they would sit down and
11 look at you right in your eye and pay attention to
12 what you are saying, they could avoid a lot of these
13 mistakes, but the first thing they want to do is they
14 want to push Prozac or some Zoloft or something rather
15 than take account, you know, rather than listen.
16 I think that they're not doing that. I do
17 not see that in our medical community. People's lives
18 are at stake when they walk into a hospital. It
19 really is. They can ruin your life in a split second
20 and they're supposed to be saving lives, and they're
21 not doing that.
22 Now I have a heart problem and just a matter
23 of time before I end up in pulmonary edema, you know,
24 because doctors are not listening.
25 And another thing I will say, they always say

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1 tiny. They're always using that tiny. They like to
2 emphasize tiny and small. I would hate to hear them
3 say severe, I really would, because by the time it's
4 severe the person is dead.
5 So I think that really the doctors need to
6 listen. They need to really just listen and quit
7 being afraid of us. We're not going to -- well, I
8 don't know. I can't speak for all, but I know I'm not
9 going to sue them. I'm not going to take what they've
10 got. They've worked very hard for what they've got.
11 But these were my body parts and I got nothing, I
12 never even got an apology for this.
13 So I really do think that the doctors need to
14 sit down and listen and quit running people through so
15 quickly as they do.
16 I'm not very good verbally. I'm very good
17 when I write it on paper, but when it comes to verbal

18 expression I'm not really good at that, so you can say
19 I'm screwing up here, I'm messing up, so....

20 DR. SIMMER: Thank you. I know one thing,
21 you certainly aren't messing up. We appreciate your
22 communication today. Thank you.

23 MS. LEE: Thank you. Am I the only one here?