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Twice each decade for the rest of her life, 8-year-old Barbara LaRosa will be wheeled into operating rooms to have her artificial hips replaced. Those operations will be paid for out of the \$3.2 million a jury awarded Barbara on Thursday. Page 4.

Funding a Lifetime of Surgery

By Dennis Bell and Dennis Hevesi

Mineola — In 10 years, 8-year-old Barbara LaRosa is to be wheeled into an operating room to have artificial hips implanted.

Twice each decade after that, for the rest of her life, she can expect to be wheeled into an operating room to have those hips replaced.

Those operations are to be paid for out of \$3.2 million awarded to Barbara on Thursday by a State Supreme Court jury in a medical-malpractice suit against her pediatrician and the hospital where she was born.

For three weeks, the six-member jury had listened intently to the often-contradictory statements of seven doctors and 12 nurses called to the stand during the suit against Central General Hospital in Plainview and Dr. Neil Palladino, her pediatrician.

Barbara, of 44 Alexander Ave., East Farmingdale, was born at Central General on April 18, 1974. Her attorney, Steven E. North of Manhattan, said that "when Barbara was 4 days old, she apparently was dropped and nobody did anything about it. The poor little kid went on and on with an infection and a swollen head. She'll be crippled the rest of her life." Lawyers for the hospital and Palladino contended that the infant had been injured at birth.

Barbara suffered a fractured skull, a broken collarbone and internal bleeding in the brain. The bleeding caused an infection, which spread throughout her body. The infection attacked her hip joints, destroying bone tissue.

Rosa LaRosa, Barbara's mother, said her daughter has "non-union of both hips. The joint and the ball of each hip are not connected in the way that they should be. They just never grew because of the infection."

The hospital will have to pay 80 per cent of the \$3.2 million, with Palladino paying the re-

mainder. Barbara received \$500,000 for pain and suffering in the past and \$2.5 million for suffering in the future. She was awarded \$150,000 for future medical expenses and \$33,000 for past medical expenses. Her mother received \$50,000 for mental anguish.

Glenn Feinberg, the lawyer for Central General, said the hospital will appeal the verdict. "There was no evidence that Central General did anything to harm the child. We believe these injuries were explicable by birth injuries," he said. Dr. Lee Goldsmith, a physician-attorney who represented Palladino, could not be reached for comment.

At 8, Barbara is too young to undergo the hip implants. The first operation will take place when she is 18. Assuming that she will live to the age of 78, the jury awarded Barbara funds to pay for six pairs of implants as the artificial hips deteriorate. "They have to put in two artificial hips [made of] plastic and steel," Mrs. LaRosa said. "That would mean six operations on each hip, 12 operations. You're talking about a lifetime for a child. I just hope that they work. I hope her body accepts them." Each operation must be done separately.

North said a copy of a chest X-ray taken shortly after Barbara's birth showed that she did not have a broken collarbone — proving, he contended, that the injuries were not incurred at birth. Feinberg disagreed with North's interpretation of the X-ray. He read part of the trial transcript, quoting Dr. Alan Fleischman, a pediatrician, as saying: "It would be impossible for anyone to be certain [from the X-ray] that there was not a fracture there."

Mrs. LaRosa said she was "very grateful to the jury. They came up with a big award, but the baby needs it. No one knows what type of pain she's gone through."



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Barbara LaRosa and her mother, Rosa, after jury's award