



Western Pa. nurse accused in 2 patient deaths was on the job until whistleblower lawsuit was unsealed

Nolan Chismire, who's accused of stealing and using drugs on the job, was working at Heritage Valley Sewickley as recently as mid-June, months after the lawsuit was filed in February



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JUL 1, 2026

4:49 PM

The emergency room nurse accused of negligence in the deaths of two patients while he was allegedly intoxicated was still working at Heritage Valley Sewickley Hospital as of two weeks ago, according to an attorney who is pursuing a whistleblower lawsuit against the hospital.

Joseph A. Valenti, partner at the Downtown offices of Saul Ewing LLC, said Wednesday that registered nurse Nolan D. Chismire was working at Heritage Valley Sewickley as recently as June 15, when a six-count amended whistleblower complaint against Chismire, Heritage Valley Health System CEO Norm Mitry, chief nursing officer Linda Homyk and others was unsealed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District.

[The lawsuit was filed in February](#) on behalf of two of Chismire's co-workers.

The suit alleges that HVHS managers covered up years of staff complaints about Chismire's theft and use of opiates and other narcotics while on duty.

HVHS violated the federal False Claims Act by billing Medicare and other government insurers for drugs that Chismire had stolen, according to the lawsuit, which means the defendants are liable for treble damages.

"A junkie nurse is not a story," Valenti said. "A junkie nurse who was kept on eight years is a disaster. It's heartbreaking that so many people were disregarded."

Chismire did not return a request for comment Wednesday.

The lawsuit connected Chismire's drug use to the deaths of two patients in 2024 — a 70-year-old woman who was admitted to the emergency room

with a non-life threatening problem, but died as the result of a medication error; and a 47-year-old man who left the hospital and suffered a head injury in the parking lot after Chismire declined to treat him.

The man was taken to Allegheny General Hospital, where he died, according to the complaint.

Allegheny Health Network President Mark Sevco, who visited HVHS on Wednesday to announce the affiliation of the two health systems, declined to comment on the litigation. He also said he didn't know if Chismire was still employed at HVHS.

But he said safety and quality were at the core of AHN's values.

"There's always opportunities to improve, of course," he said. "You can't believe everything you read."

HVHS has not yet responded to the lawsuit in court. Valenti said a response is typically due in 20 days of the complaint being filed, but he would likely ask the court to extend that period to 60 days in the whistleblower case. U.S. District Judge Cathy Bissoon is hearing the case.

The Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing website indicated that Chismire's nursing license was active as of Wednesday. The board, which considers disciplinary action, meets July 11, but the agenda has not yet been released.

The state said it doesn't comment on complaints filed against licensees as a matter of policy, but every complaint is investigated, according to a spokesman.

"The department reviews every potential license violation it is alerted to, whether that is through a complaint filed with the department, a notification from local law enforcement or through media reports," press secretary Matt Heckel said in an email response to questions about Chismire's nursing license.

In addition to HVHS' two hospitals, AHN picked up 36 physician offices and seven multi-specialty outpatient clinics in Beaver and western Allegheny counties as part of the affiliation. The clinics provide express and primary care, diagnostic imaging, lab draws, physical rehabilitation and other services.

Some 3,000 HVHS employees now work for AHN, which operates 16 hospitals in Pennsylvania and New York. AHN is a wholly owned subsidiary of Highmark Health, which also has a Blue Cross Blue Shield insurer arm, the third largest in the country.

First Published: July 1, 2026, 4:49 p.m.



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