

# Doctors cleared in suit over John Ritter's death

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**The Associated Press**

A jury in Glendale, Calif., cleared a cardiologist and a radiologist Friday of negligence in the diagnosis and treatment of actor John Ritter, who died of a torn aorta in September 2003.

Jurors found that the radiologist advised Ritter to follow up with treatment by a physician after a body scan two years before his death. Ritter didn't follow the order.

The lawsuit was brought by Ritter's widow and children, who claimed Ritter's death resulted in a loss of as much as \$67 million in future earnings.

The 9-3 verdict means there is no damage judgment against the doctors.

Radiologist Matthew Lotysch testified he told Ritter he had calcification in three coronary arteries and should consult other doctors. But in a related finding, the jury decided that Ritter's failure to pursue that medical consultation was not a cause of his death.

The cardiologist, Dr. Joseph Lee, was summoned to treat Ritter at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center.

Ritter, 54, star of TV show *8 Simple Rules ... for Dating My Teenage Daughter*, died of a torn aorta after being treated for a heart attack.

Testimony showed Lee was called in later in the evening after Ritter had already been diagnosed with a heart attack.

During the trial, lawyers for Ritter's widow, Amy Yasbeck, sought to show that Lee rushed to a faulty diagnosis. They claimed he failed to have a chest X-ray taken that would have revealed the torn aorta.

The defence team argued the aortic dissection was lethal and contended that even with surgery, the outcome would have been the same.

"The system worked and we're very, very happy that they did the right thing," said attorney Stephen C. Fraser, who represented Lotysch.

Eight other medical personnel and the hospital previously made settlements with the family worth \$14 million.



Actor John Ritter is shown in January 2003. He died of a torn aorta the following September. (Associated Press)

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