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LATE CITY FINAL

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4-Drug Sedation Killed 'First Wives' Author: Autopsy

Author Olivia Goldsmith died of complications from anesthesia during plastic surgery at a prestigious Manhattan hospital, which already has been fined for violating state health rules in the case, the medical examiner said yesterday.

An autopsy on the "First Wives Club" author found that the cause of her Jan. 15 death was "cardiorespiratory arrest during facial cosmetic surgery under sedation" with four different drugs, said Ellen Borakove, spokeswoman for the Medical Examiner's Office.

The manner of death was ruled to be "therapeutic complications," the description for a death that occurs during a procedure with a known risk, such as anesthesia, Borakove said.

"The First Wives Club" was made into a movie starring Goldie Hawn, Diane Keaton and Bette Midler.

Goldsmith, 54, was undergoing a chin tuck on Jan. 7 at Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital when she went into distress, and fell into a coma, dying eight days later at Lenox Hill Hospital.

A month later, 56-year-old Susan Malitz went into cardiac arrest and died in the midst of sedation for a face lift at Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat.

A state Health Department investigation, which found "egregious violations" in both cases, led to Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat being fined a total of \$20,000. The hospital had failed to conduct basic preoperative assessments, adequately monitor changes in the patients' vital signs and effectively respond when they began having problems, the department said.

Steven Mintz, a lawyer who represents Goldsmith's estate, said he planned to file suit against the hospital. Malitz's family has hired a top medical-malpractice lawyer.

A spokesman for the hospital could not be reached for comment.