

Meet Louisiana's Medical Malpractice Pioneer

John Hammons was fresh out of law school in the late 1970s when two clients approached him needing medical malpractice representation. He didn't practice in that area, but he felt led to undertake the challenge.

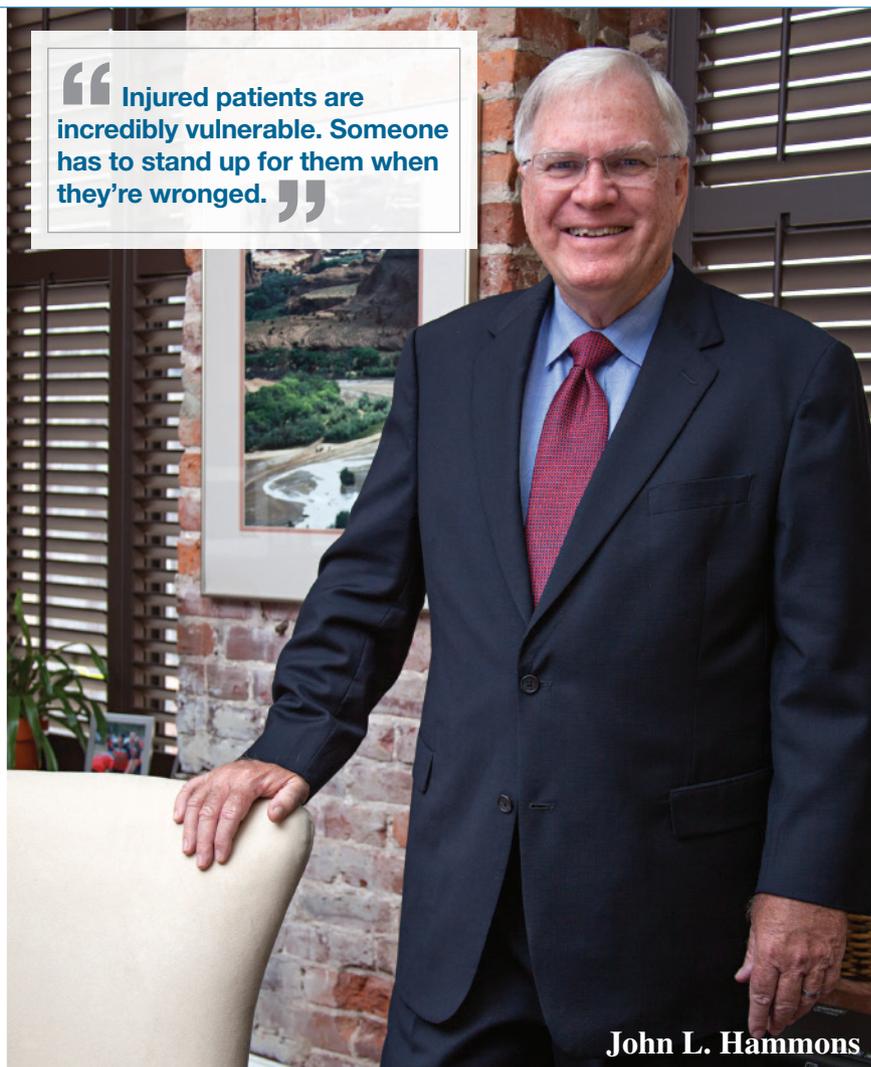
"I took the cases because I felt strongly they deserved representation," Hammons recalls. Both cases resolved favorably, and attorneys from across the state began referring medical malpractice cases to him. "I wasn't an expert, but I had done two more successful cases than virtually anyone else in Louisiana," he says.

Within three years, Hammons' caseload was substantial enough for him to focus exclusively on medical malpractice law. Thirty-five years later, he still feels "thankful, blessed, and excited" to do this work every day.

Higher Calling

For Hammons, practicing medical malpractice law isn't just a job; it's a ministry. "Injured patients are incredibly vulnerable and outgunned against the Louisiana healthcare legal system," he says. "Someone has to stand up for them, and I believe God has called me to do this work."

However noble, the path isn't easy. Louisiana medical legislation offers significantly more protection for the medical community than other states. Regardless of a patient's injury, general damages can never exceed \$500,000. "Under these statutes, none of my clients can ever be fairly compensated,



“Injured patients are incredibly vulnerable. Someone has to stand up for them when they're wronged.”

John L. Hammons

but it's worth exposing the truth and even influencing stricter statutes going forward," Hammons says.

Such was the case when a patient with hypertension died from a stroke after a root canal because the dentist didn't monitor his post-operative blood pressure. Hammons' work led to the implementation of new post-operative monitoring standards in the Louisiana dental community.

In another case, when Hammons was suspicious of a hospital's documentation claiming that a fluke heart attack caused a woman's death following a triple bypass surgery, he fought to exhume the body for an autopsy—which revealed that the surgical team had cut a major artery at the

beginning of the surgery and the woman had bled to death within minutes.

Hammons has taken hundreds more cases like these. Every one, he says, has been worth the challenge: "It's an uphill battle because our media portrays the medical community as heroes—which, usually, they are—so it's hard to convince a jury when a doctor is at fault for unacceptable care."

Ironically, he notes, his closest friends are doctors: "When I first started, I actually received threats from the medical community, but I've built a good reputation over the years by never pursuing a case that didn't have sound medical and scientific evidence."

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