

Patient Falls: Nurse Faulted For Giving PRN Sleep Aid.

The seventy-four year-old patient was in the hospital recovering from a fractured hip.

Early in the evening the patient asked his nurse for something to help him sleep. The nurse phoned the patient's physician's partner who prescribed 10 mg of Ambien. During the middle of the night the patient got out of bed, fell and struck his head. Afterward his physician did not call for a CT scan until the patient had already become comatose from a subdural hematoma.

The nurse was faulted for the fall for giving 10 mg of Ambien when the maximum dose for a geriatric patient is half that. The nurse was also faulted for giving a prn sleep med when there was no prior charting that the patient actually had been having difficulty sleeping.

The Supreme Court of Delaware approved a \$2,000,000 verdict split 60/40 between the nurse who gave the Ambien and the physician who treated the patient after he fell. **Christiana Care v. Crist, 2008 WL 2588704 (Del., July 1, 2008).**