

E.R.: Nurses Did Not Assess Full Seriousness Of Patient's Injury.

A twenty-two year-old walked into the E.R. under her own power and asked to be seen. She was driven to the hospital after her cousin shot her in the right temple with a pellet from an air rifle.

Believing it was only a superficial wound from a BB gun, E.R. personnel were very slow to respond as the patient's neurological status deteriorated to the point she became stuporous. Two hours after coming in she had to be intubated. Then it took almost two more hours to get a CT scan that confirmed a pellet in the brain and another two hours to get an air ambulance to move her to a major trauma center.

Because a victim of a gunshot wound to the head generally does not walk into the E.R. and ask to be seen, the E.R. nurse triaged the patient as urgent but not emergent

Nevertheless, a pellet from an air rifle, just like a bullet from a firearm, can penetrate the skull. Penetration of a projectile into the skull, as in this case, can lead to swelling, brainstem herniation and brain death.

SUPERIOR COURT
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
February 11, 2010

The jury in the Superior Court, Los Angeles County, California awarded more than \$12 million for patient's future care. She is now in a persistent vegetative state.

The jury reportedly heard testimony that when the police served a search warrant on the hospital risk manager for the E.R. security tapes, the tapes, which would have shown how long the patient was sitting there with little being done for her, had already been erased. Ramirez v. AHMC Healthcare, 2010 WL 659114 (Sup. Ct. Los Angeles Co., California, February 11, 2010).