

IV Infiltration: Critical Care Nurse Did Not Meet The Standard Of Care.

The patient was in the critical care unit recovering from coronary bypass surgery. He was under heavy sedation from propofol infusing through an IV in the back of his right hand. He had numerous other IV's infusing at other locations.

Hospital policy required the patient's nurse to check all IV's and document an assessment at least every four hours.

According to the chart, the nurse checked the right-hand IV at 7:00 p.m. when her shift started and again at 4:30 a.m. At 4:30 a.m. significant infiltration of the medication into the surrounding tissues was discovered, which led to complications from tissue damage.

It is below the standard of care not to check an IV every four hours if required by the physician's orders or by hospital policy.

However, it does not follow automatically that having checked the IV would have prevented tissue damage from infiltration.

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL
May 6, 2010

The California Court of Appeal agreed with the patient's nursing expert. If no IV checks were documented from 7:00 p.m. until 4:30 a.m., then none were done, and if none were done, the nurse's care of her patient fell below the standard of care.

The Court did not accept the implication from documentation of checks of other IV sites or drawing of blood from another port on the right hand for blood gluceses q 2 hours that the propofol was also checked as often as it should have been.

However, the hospital was found not liable because the patient had no proof that if the IV had been checked as required the bad outcome would not have occurred. Galvez v. Loma Linda Univ. Hosp., 2010 WL 1806296 (Cal. App., May 6, 2010).