

Post-Op Care: Failure To Monitor Leads To Amputation Of Pediatric Patient's Leg.

The fourteen year-old patient was taken to the hospital by ambulance with a fractured distal femur.

An orthopedist repaired the leg by closed reduction with percutaneous pinning.

At midnight, in the recovery room, the patient began to complain to his nurse that his leg was numb and he could not move his toes.

At 8:00 a.m. the nurse on duty noted that the toes were cool to the touch, there was no pulse in the foot and the patient was complaining of increased pain, but this information was reportedly not relayed to the orthopedist.

At 3:00 p.m. an arteriogram showed no blood flow below the knee. No vascular surgeon was available at the hospital so the leg had to be amputated and was amputated some three hours later.

Nursing Negligence

The family's lawyer brought in an outside nursing expert to testify that the hospital's nurses failed to monitor the patient competently, failed to understand the significance of the ominous signs they were seeing and failed to report to the orthopedic surgeon in time to save the patient's leg from having to be amputated.

Medical Negligence

The family's lawyer also brought in an outside orthopedist to testify that the treating orthopedist failed to discern and deal with the fact the popliteal artery was apparently damaged in the trauma that caused the fracture.

The jury in the Superior Court, Dougherty County, Georgia awarded the young man \$24,529,286 split 90% from the hospital, 3% from the orthopedist and 7% from his medical practice group. **Harris v. Sumpter Regional Hosp.**, 2008 WL 1808397 (Sup. Ct. Dougherty Co., Georgia, March 10, 2008).