

Compartment Syndrome: Big Verdict For Negligent Nursing Care.

The patient obtained a jury verdict of \$14,891,123.02 in the Circuit Court, Cook County, Illinois as damages for muscle loss and tissue damage in her lower leg from compartment syndrome which developed after knee surgery.

The case reportedly involved an almost total failure of the nursing process in the patient's post-operative care.

The nurses were faulted for failing to examine the patient and assess her pain and pulse, tension, temperature, capillary refill, color, movement, flexion and extension in the affected lower extremity.

In addition to the legal duty to conduct adequate ongoing assessments for signs and symptoms of compartment syndrome, the nurses had the duty to communicate changes in their patient's condition to the physicians involved in her care and to utilize the nursing chain of command to advocate for timely medical intervention on their patient's behalf.

The nursing process requires assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation and re-evaluation.

That should have included a complete head-to-toe neurovascular exam and assessment and communication of the results to the physicians.

CIRCUIT COURT, COOK COUNTY
ILLINOIS
April 2, 2009

The hospital's defense was reportedly hampered by the inability to produce critical evidence in court, nursing progress notes, critical-care flow sheets and neurovascular assessment flow sheets, for reasons which were not explained. ***Richner v. VHS Acquisitions, 2009 WL 2385493 (Cir. Ct. Cook Co., Illinois, April 2, 2009).***