

Nursing Notes: Patient Fell, But Did Not Dehisce Surgical Wound.

The patient was in the hospital recovering from open-heart triple-bypass surgery when his nurse assisted him to the bathroom.

He fell while being assisted back to bed. After that the surgical site in his chest dehiscenced and a post-operative infection set in. He had to go back to surgery for revision of the surgical sutures.

He sued the hospital for the nurse's negligence related to his fall.

Based on the nursing documentation, a reasonable jury could see a violation of nursing standards, and at the same time rule that the violation did not cause the dehiscence.

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
APPELLATE DIVISION
November 1, 2005

The Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division, agreed with the jury that the nurse was negligent for ignoring physician's orders for him to stay in bed.

However, the nurse's notes candidly admitted that the fall happened and carefully described how it happened, that is, that he only dropped to his knees.

Thus the jury had good reason to believe, based on the way the nurse had documented the fall in the nursing notes, that the fall did not cause any trauma to his chest to explain the dehiscence of his surgical wound. The nurse's and doctors' physical assessments shortly after the fall also did not find any chest trauma.

The court said dehiscence and infections are unfortunate but common post-operative occurrences which are not necessarily linked to a healthcare provider's negligence. McKinless v. Francis, 2005 WL 2850067 (N.J. App., November 1, 2005).