

Intubation: Dentures Not Removed, Jury Faults Nurses, Physicians.

The fifty-five year-old patient came to the emergency room with breathing problems. She was admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit.

The physician neglected to remove the patient's partial denture before intubating her in the ICU.

The patient was weaned from the respirator after one week and was able to breathe on her own.

With hindsight it is now known that the processes of intubation and extubation apparently caused the denture to become lodged in the patient's posterior pharynx.

While temporarily off the respirator the denture in the airway caused continued internal bleeding, aspiration of fluid into the patient's lungs and a collapsed lung. A second intubation was necessary.

The second intubation was performed with the denture still in the airway. The patient continued to deteriorate and soon died from shock.

Family's Lawsuit Faults Medical, Nursing Care

The family's lawsuit alleged it was below the standard of care for the patient's nurses and physicians not to check the patient's mouth before intubating her.

The nurses reportedly tried to claim the family had told them that the patient had left her denture at home, testimony that did not seem to make sense.

The lawsuit further faulted the nurses for failing to follow up with the bleeding they observed after the second intubation, an abnormal sign that something was seriously wrong which demanded immediate medical attention.

The jury in the Superior Court, Lake County, Indiana awarded the family \$938,800 from the hospital in addition to monies the physicians had already paid to settle out of court. **Creviston v. St. Mary Medical Center, 2007 WL 5171070 (Sup. Ct. Lake Co., Indiana, November 30, 2007).**