

Diabetic Patient: Coma, Brain Damage, Nurses Faulted.

The insulin-dependent diabetic patient was admitted to the hospital's med/surg unit from the E.R.

Two days later he was showing signs of agitation, confusion, anxiety and an altered mental state. The patient's wife reportedly tried to inform the nurses that her husband was showing these signs and convince them that it was probably because he was getting too much insulin, but the nurses did not see any cause for alarm.

The next day the patient was found unresponsive in a hypoglycemic coma. He went into respiratory failure and sustained brain damage. He was transferred to another hospital, then to hospice care where he died three months after first coming to the hospital.

His widow's lawsuit faulted the physicians at the hospital for failing to order glucose testing and monitoring of his oral intake, then when he was found unresponsive for failing to deal with his hypoglycemia before sending him to radiology.

The lawsuit also faulted the nurses for failing to develop a care plan to include closely watching the patient for signs of hypoglycemia and monitoring his oral intake. The nurses also failed to appreciate obvious sign of hypoglycemia the evening before the day he was found unresponsive.

The nurses should have appreciated the patient's risk for hypoglycemia, monitored him closely, recognized the signs when they appeared and taken appropriate action.

CIRCUIT COURT
WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN
February 25, 2010

The widow's lawsuit filed in the Circuit Court, Wayne County, Michigan settled for \$475,000 before trial was scheduled. **Downey v. Henry Ford Health System**, 2010 WL 5166446 (Cir. Ct. Wayne Co., Michigan, February 25, 2010).