

Patient's Fall: Fall Precautions Were Not Started Based On Current Assessment.

The seventy-two year-old patient was admitted to the hospital for treatment of heart failure and cancer.

On admission her fall-risk assessment score was 6. Two days later it rose to 8.

Policies at the facility called for fall risk interventions to be started for any patient with a fall-risk score above 6.

The evening of the third day in the hospital the patient's daughter reportedly told the nurse her mother was trying to climb out of bed.

The next morning the patient was found unconscious on the bathroom floor. It was not clear whether she was injured from falling. However, prolonged lack of supplemental oxygen while lying on the floor resulted in the patient never regaining consciousness. She died later that evening.

The patient's fall risk was assessed on a daily basis.

A score above 6 on the risk assessment instrument in use at the facility meant that fall risk interventions were necessary.

When her score rose from 6 to 8 nothing was done.

DISTRICT COURT
ORLEANS PARISH, LOUISIANA
July 6, 2010

The family's case filed in the District Court, Orleans Parish, Louisiana resulted in a \$75,000 settlement from the hospital and an additional award by the Court from the state's Patient Compensation Fund.

The nurses should have provided a call light, regularly checked on the patient and discussed restraints with the physician.

The nurses should not have advised the daughter not to stay when the daughter asked the nurses if it was advisable for someone to stay through the night. **Dugas v. Tenet Health, 2010 WL 5663903 (Dist. Ct. Orleans Parish, Louisiana, July 6, 2010).**