

Heparin Lock: Nurse Gave Concentrated Medication IV.

The patient was prescribed Phenergan for nausea while in the hospital recovering from gynecological surgery.

The IV on the back of her left hand was converted to a Hep-Lock the day after surgery. She got the Phenergan several more days without any problem until an inexperienced nurse who had just completed her training reportedly gave Phenergan through the Hep-Lock in a more concentrated form which is not indicated for IV administration. The patient experienced an immediate burning sensation in the hand and arm.

The patient filed suit against the hospital for nursing negligence.

The nurse was negligent. However, the evidence is lacking that the nurse's negligence caused the disabling injuries the patient claimed in her lawsuit.

CIRCUIT COURT
WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICHIGAN
May 20, 2009

The patient, a dentist, claimed that damage to her anterior interosseous nerve resulted in partial loss of function in the thumb, index finger and middle finger of her left hand, which added up to a major impairment of her earning capacity in her profession.

The hospital denied that the nurse was negligent. In the alternative, even if the nurse was negligent, the hospital's attorney argued the patient's injury was at most a mild and temporary nerve irritation which did not affect her functional capacity.

The jury in the Circuit Court, Washtenaw County, Michigan ruled that the nurse committed an inexcusable medication error and was negligent, but that error did not cause the injuries the patient was claiming in her lawsuit. **Stahle v. Chelsea Community Hosp., 2009 WL 4758635 (Cir. Ct. Washtenaw Co., Michigan, May 20, 2009).**