

PACU vs. PICU: Court Faults Physicians, Not Nurses.

The events occurred after the infant's third surgery, at age ten months, for correction of her congenital gastroschisis.

Infant Was Sent To The Post Anesthesia Care Unit Not The

Pediatric Intensive Care Unit

After her first two surgeries at this hospital the infant was sent to the pediatric intensive care unit.

This time she was sent to the post anesthesia care unit. The nurse notified the physician her patient's hands and feet were cool and bluish and her heart rate was increased. The PACU nurse basically did nothing further for an hour. Then a physician came in and decided to transfer her to a private room on the pediatric floor.

The infant got inadequate post-operative monitoring from the nurse in the post anesthesia care unit.

When she was transferred to a room on the pediatric floor the nurse within minutes picked up on the fact she was seizing and notified the physicians, albeit too late to avert profound brain damage.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTH DAKOTA
August 14, 2009

The US District Court for the District of South Dakota ruled that the hospital, as the employer of the PACU and pediatric floor nurses, was not at fault.

The court expressly faulted the underlying medical decision to send the patient to the PACU rather than the PICU. The surgeon and the anesthesiologist will have to sort out the blame for that decision when they stand trial before a civil jury in the patient's lawsuit. ***Vearrier v. Karl*, 2009 WL 2524581 (D.S.D., August 14, 2009).**