

Post-Operative Nursing Care: Nurses Failed To Take Action.

The patient, herself a nurse, had just had a complicated anterior-approach lumbar spinal fusion. A spinal specialist accessed the spine in her lower back through an opening through her abdomen.

In the post anesthesia recovery unit that afternoon the patient's blood pressure became unstable and she had no pulse in her lower leg.

PACU Nurses Charted Their Findings Took No Further Action

The post-anesthesia nurses charted their findings but did not report to the surgeon, to the chief of surgery who had participated in the case or to anyone else.

The next a.m. when the surgeon came in and learned about the patient's condition he got a CT which confirmed the patient was bleeding internally and had an arterial blockage in her lower leg. The patient was airlifted to another facility for surgery which stopped the internal bleeding, but the leg had to be amputated.

The patient's lawsuit filed in the Superior Court, Litchfield, Connecticut resulted in a settlement offer of \$5,250,000 from the hospital which the patient accepted.

The patient's lawyers were prepared to argue the nurses should have called the physician and arranged to have the patient returned to the O.R. promptly when the loss of pulse in the lower leg was first detected. **Kelleher v. New Milford Hosp., 2009 WL 5893680 (Sup. Ct. Litchfield, Connecticut, October 5, 2009).**