

Patient Suicide: Nurse Gave Patient A Razor, Did Not Check Back For Three Hours.

The forty-one year-old patient, a male attorney in solo legal practice, went to a neurologist for headaches and insomnia. Five days later he went to the hospital with complaints of increasing anxiety, difficulty concentrating and a sensation that his heart was racing out of control.

He was admitted to cardiac telemetry. His brain MRI came back normal. Finding no apparent organic pathology to account for the patient's symptoms the neurologist recommended the admitting physician order anti-anxiety medication and get a psychiatric consultation.

A telemetry unit nurse honored the patient's request for a razor to shave his chest hairs so the EKG leads would stop bothering him.

When the nurse checked on him three hours later he was dead by his own hand.

DISTRICT COURT, HIDALGO COUNTY
TEXAS
March 5, 2008

The patient's nurse noticed he was not in his bed. His bathroom door was locked so she called maintenance to unlock it.

They found the patient dead inside. He had slit his wrists and neck with the double-edged razor he had asked for to shave his chest hairs so that the EKG leads would stop bothering him.

The jury in the District Court, Hidalgo County, Texas awarded \$9,000,000 damages from the hospital for his widow and three young children. Villarreal v. Rio Grande Regional Hosp., 2008 WL 859667 (Dist. Ct. Hidalgo Co., Texas, March 5, 2008).