

Rehab Nursing: Expert's Opinion On Standard Of Care.

The elderly patient was admitted to a rehab facility after a stroke. Her medical diagnoses included diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure.

One morning the nurses discovered the patient's right leg was cool to the touch and did not have a pulse. The patient was sent to the emergency room.

A surgical procedure was started at the hospital to remove an embolism from the leg, but during the procedure the surgeon discovered that the leg was pre-gangrenous and amputated above the knee.

The patient died nine days later.

The expert hired for the family's lawsuit deduced from the medical records that the embolism was present and was causing arterial occlusion 24 to 36 hours before the nurses actually discovered it. That is, the leg was basically no longer salvageable when the patient got to the hospital.

A rehab patient's whole body should be checked daily for edema, for signs that the skin is abraded, torn or ulcerated and for the temperature of the skin to the touch.

Any significant findings must be reported to the physician.

COURT OF APPEALS OF TEXAS
July 2, 2009

The family's medical expert went on to state that the standard of care for rehab nursing mandates a daily body check.

The Court of Appeals of Texas accepted what the family's expert had to say about the standard of care and his conclusion that if the standard of care had been followed by the facility's nurses the patient's injury would not have occurred. RGV Healthcare v. Estevis, __ S.W. 3d __, 2009 WL 1886889 (Tex. App., July 2, 2009).