

ICU: Alarms Sound, Nurse Does Not Respond, Hypoxic Brain Injury Results.

The twenty-two year-old patient underwent a complex procedure at a major teaching facility to resect his brain and skull, then was transferred to the ICU at another hospital. He had been badly traumatized falling from a moving vehicle.

After several weeks he became somewhat responsive but was still on a ventilator with both hands and arms in restraints.

Family Was Told to Leave the Room Nurse Was in Another Room With Another Patient

The tragic series of events on the night in question began when the family was asked to leave the room at the change of nursing shifts but were not allowed back in right away when a new nurse came on.

The nurse assigned to the patient was also assigned to another patient in a nearby room.

A problem with the other patient's IV line reportedly developed and kept the nurse in that room for a considerable period of time.

No One Heard Or Responded to Alarms Until It Was Too Late

Meanwhile, the airway of the patient who was alone in his ICU room became obstructed. An alarm sounded as his O₂ saturation dropped. Then he went into bradycardia and eventually asystole which sounded still more alarm tones.

When his situation was finally noticed a code was called and he was resuscitated. However, significant permanent hypoxic brain damage resulted from delay.

The patient, starting to respond before, has been completely comatose since.

The lawsuit filed in the Superior Court, Los Angeles County, California settled before trial for \$4,750,000. **Confidential v. Confidential**, 2009 WL 199777 (Sup. Ct. Los Angeles Co., California, January 5, 2009).