

PEG Tube: Nurse Faulted For Aspiration, Death Of Patient.

Due to complications of past medical treatment the patient had an esophageal stricture which necessitated that she receive nourishment through a PEG tube inserted into her GI tract.

She was in the hospital's ICU recovering from surgery to remove an infected hip prosthesis.

Family members testified they saw the ICU nurse lay the patient flat on her back to remove drains from her incision while infusing nutrition through her PEG tube at the same time.

They testified the patient aspirated fluid into her lungs and the nurse had to page a physician.

DISTRICT COURT
CADDO PARISH, LOUISIANA
March 19, 2009

The patient's nurse reportedly paged the physician to report that the patient's oxygen saturation had dropped, but did not mention anything about aspiration of nutrition during the tube feeding.

The patient deteriorated and had to be intubated and placed on a ventilator. At some point the patient pulled out her own endotracheal tube and suffocated to death.

The family filed a lawsuit against the hospital, alleging that the ICU nurse should have raised the head of the bed and not laid the patient flat on her back while she was receiving a tube feeding. If that negligent act had not been committed, they alleged, the patient would not have had to have been intubated and would not have died.

The jury in the District Court, Caddo Parish, Louisiana awarded the family \$478,000 for wrongful death. **Welch v. Willis Knighton Med. Ctr., 2009 WL 6312529 (Dist. Ct. Caddo Parish, Louisiana, March 19, 2009).**