

Baribed, Turning: Court Discusses The Legal Standard Of Care For Post-CABG Nursing.

The jury ruled the hospital's nurses did not depart from the accepted standard of care in their treatment of a post-cardiac bypass surgery patient whose period of immobility happened to be prolonged by two additional procedures to revise his surgical site.

Specifically, the hospital's nurses were not responsible for the fact he developed pressure sores which progressed to decubitus ulcers.

Patient's Nursing Expert

The patient's nursing expert testified that nursing standards adamantly require patients be turned every two hours, even with a special bed.

Hospital's Nursing Expert

The hospital's nursing expert testified there are significant cardiac risks involved in moving a post-cardiac surgery patient.

The trial came down to a battle of the experts.

One nursing expert testified a patient still has to be turned manually when a baribed is in use programmed to rotate the patient.

The other expert testified manual turning is not necessary and actually carries risks of its own with patients right after cardiac surgery.

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Thus it is more appropriate to use a special bed and mattress to change pressure points continuously to minimize the risk of skin breakdown.

Nursing Research Inconclusive

Nursing texts have always stressed and continue to stress the importance of turning hospital patients.

However, the literature does not support the conclusion that turning is required when a special bed is in use, that is, that turning plus special beds produce measurably better outcomes than special beds alone, the expert said.

Further, a patient with significant co-morbidity factors such as diabetes is at risk for loss of skin integrity and slow healing even with the most competent of nursing care. Wolff v. Washington Hosp. Center, __ A.2d __, 2007 WL 4438935 (D.C., December 20, 2007).