

Cardiac Patient Left Unattended On Commode: Jury Awards Damages For Nurse's Negligence.

The patient had double coronary artery bypass surgery with mitral valve repair. The next day the pacemaker was removed in the O.R. and she went back to the ICU on epinephrine, Primacor, dobutamine and amiodarone, medications intended to normalize her problematic heart beat.

Four days after surgery she was transferred from the ICU to the telemetry unit. Transfer orders to the telemetry unit included progressive ambulation with assistance, discontinuance of her dopamine and Lasix drips, removal of her Foley catheter and bathroom privileges with assistance.

The patient said she had to urinate. A family member asked the CNA for the bedpan. The CNA replied it was better for her to try to get up and walk to the bathroom. The patient and her family balked at the idea of her getting out of bed so the CNA went to get the patient's nurse.

The patient's nurse assisted her from her bed to the bathroom, which took almost two minutes, then left her on the commode.

The jury apparently believed testimony from the CNA and the family that the CNA found the patient on the floor in the bathroom almost twenty minutes later, about the same time a different nurse caught an alarm at the telemetry station and went to the room to investigate.

The patient had gone into cardiogenic shock from stoppage of her left ventricular heart rhythm. She lived on, but with organ damage and other complications.

The Court of Appeals of Michigan endorsed a jury verdict in the patient's favor for nursing negligence for leaving a complex cardiac patient alone on the commode without stand-by assistance. **Barber v. William Beaumont Hosp.**, 2008 WL 2151382 (Mich. App., May 22, 2008).