

# Congestive Heart Failure: Verdict Faults Nursing Care.

The patient was receiving ongoing care from his cardiologist for rheumatic heart disease.

After coming to the emergency room for chest pressure, shortness of breath and dizziness he was admitted to a med/surg unit in the hospital for observation while an echocardiogram was obtained and the results interpreted by the physicians.

Over the next twelve hours his condition deteriorated. His oxygen saturation levels dropped and he needed supplemental oxygen. The physicians' diagnoses were unstable angina, congestive heart failure, pneumonia and acute coronary syndrome.

One of the physicians ordered Lasix to download the fluid causing the pulmonary edema and thereby improve oxygenation.

## **Nurse Did Not Report Lasix Was Not Working**

Throughout the night, even with the Lasix, the patient's pulmonary edema did not resolve and his oxygen saturation levels did not improve. The patient's nurse, however, did not report this to the patient's physician.

In the morning he had to be taken to the ICU. Emergency surgery was done to replace a mitral valve. The surgery was a technical success but the patient soon had to be ventilated and remained on the ventilator until he died several weeks later.

The jury in the Superior Court, Pima County, Arizona awarded the family \$1,000,000.

Sixty percent of the verdict was apportioned to the nurse's failure to monitor the patient for signs that would indicate whether or not the Lasix was having an effect on his pulmonary edema and the nurse's failure to report to the physicians that it was not working.

The physicians were faulted for the fact the patient was admitted at 4:00 a.m. but it was not until 8:35 p.m. that the results of the echocardiogram were available and nothing was done about the mitral valve problem until the next morning. **Salica v. Myer, 2009 WL 1348591 (Sup. Ct. Pima Co., Arizona, April 27, 2009).**