

Home Health: Court Blames Nurses, In Part, For Patient's Downhill Course.

The elderly patient was taking the anti-inflammatory Relafen which can cause internal gastrointestinal bleeding.

Her home-care nurses were having a lot of trouble with pressure ulcers, so her physician got lab work done. The labs showed very low hematocrit and albumin levels and a high platelet count.

Her physician did not look for the underlying cause even though her anemia and low albumin were likely factors in loss of skin integrity and slow healing. Her home health nurses backed off aggressively trying to improve her skin integrity and began to focus on end-of-life issues.

The nurses' failure to follow through on the physician's order for urinary catheterization was a significant factor in the continued ulceration of her sacral area due to the continued presence of urine.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WASHINGTON
December 27, 2006

The US District Court for the Eastern District of Washington found the patient's physicians and nurses negligent.

The court directly faulted the nurses for ignoring the physician's order for urinary catheterization. The nurses apparently took the patient's son at his word that a catheter was not necessary because he was going to see that his mother stayed dry. **Wells v. Columbia Valley Community Health, 2006 WL 3813705 (E.D. Wash., December 27, 2006).**