

Fall: Fracture Not Found, Embolism Leads To Patient's Death.

The eighty-seven year-old patient's diagnoses in the hospital were dementia, malnutrition and prostate cancer.

He fell out of his chair in his hospital room. The initial x-rays of his lower leg were read as negative for fracture. Before a second set of follow-up x-rays were evaluated he was discharged back to the nursing home where he resided.

Back in the nursing home, it took a considerable time before anyone noticed the skin discoloration of his lower leg and the inversion of his right foot.

He was sent back to the hospital where he died from a pulmonary embolism the medical examiner related to delay in treatment of his right tibia fracture.

The hospital discharged the patient back to the nursing home before follow-up x-rays were read.

Back at the nursing home it took a while before anyone noticed the discoloration of his lower leg and the inversion of his foot, signs of a possible bone fracture.

SUPREME COURT
BRONX COUNTY, NEW YORK
October 29, 2010

The family's lawsuit filed in the Supreme Court, Bronx County, New York resulted in a total settlement of \$325,000, half from the hospitals' and half from the nursing homes' insurance company.

The lawsuit did not allege negligence in the fact the patient fell out of the chair.

The allegations were that both facilities provided substandard physical assessment of his injuries after the fall. X-rays right after a fracture do not always show a fracture. Subsequent x-rays were obtained but never read before the patient left. At the nursing home the signs should have been noticed more promptly. Coronado v. Montefiore Med. Ctr., 2010 WL 5893790 (Sup. Ct. Bronx Co., New York, October 29, 2010).