

IM Injection: Court Accepts Nurse's Expert Opinion.

The patient sued an outpatient medical facility over an intramuscular Depo-Medrol injection she claimed caused nerve damage in her shoulder.

The Court of Appeals of Georgia has so far only put to rest the preliminary legal issue whether a registered nurse's report, as opposed to a physician's report, will suffice as the expert opinion a patient must file with the court to go ahead with a malpractice case.

The court endorsed the nurse's report

in all respects, that is, the nurse was ruled qualified to express an opinion as to the legal standard of care for a nurse giving an IM injection and to express a medical opinion that a brachial plexus injury is a possible consequence of giving an IM injection improperly in the upper arm. Allen v. Family Medical Center, P.C. __ S.E. 2d __, 2007 WL 2631882 (Ga. App., September 12, 2007).

Prior to administering an IM injection the nurse must decide the most appropriate location, that is, the deltoid or the gluteal muscle.

The nurse should take into consideration the patient's age, weight, skin turgor and the type of medication to be administered.

The nurse must establish the location of the deltoid muscle, not just "eyeball" its location.

The nurse must take into consideration the patient's arm size, whether skinny, average or obese, the select the appropriate size for the needle.

An injection into the deltoid of an adult patient should be administered at a ninety-degree angle at a location approximately two inches below the acromial process, at a depth shallow enough not to contact the major brachial nerve plexuses in the patient's upper arm.

COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA
September 12, 2007