

Head Injury: Nurses Failed To Communicate Change In Status To Physician.

A young woman was in the hospital recovering from a closed head injury sustained in a motor vehicle accident

She was initially sent from the emergency department to the hospital's neurological intensive care unit, then transferred to the intermediate neurological unit.

On the afternoon of her second day in the hospital she began to show signs her pain level was increasing.

Her nurses were closely monitoring her Glasgow Coma Scale score. It was assessed at 13 at 4:00 p.m. but dropped to 9 shortly after 7:00 p.m. The physician was not notified until almost 10:30 p.m. by which time the patient was in very dire straights. The patient died the next day.

The doctor has the right to defend himself against allegations of malpractice.

It is within the physician's standard of care for the physician to rely on the patient's nurses to notify him of significant changes in the patient's status.

COURT OF APPEALS OF TENNESSEE
July 23, 2010

The Court of Appeals of Tennessee ruled in the physician's favor on the question of his own malpractice.

That is, a physician has the right to defend himself or herself by bringing in expert testimony that it is within the standard of care for a physician to rely on the hospital's nurses to advise the physician of significant changes in the patient's status which require immediate attention, as in this case.

The jury ruled the nurses' negligence was the cause of death. ***Stanfield v. Neblett***, 2010 WL 2875206 (Tenn. App., July 23, 2010).