

## Emergency Room: Hospital Admits Liability For Cardiac Patient's Death From Heart Attack.

The forty-nine year-old patient reportedly died from a heart attack while lying on a gurney near the nurses station in the emergency department waiting to receive treatment.

He came to the emergency department with a complaint of burning pain in his throat. He was nauseous and vomiting and had an elevated respiratory rate and pulse.

There was a history of a prior coronary artery stent placement.

The nurse triaged the patient as not urgent and placed a call to the physician. An EKG was done, but the abnormal readout was not passed along to the physician.

The emergency room physician ordered cardiac monitoring but the nurses did not start a monitor. He was sent for x-rays and returned.

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***The hospital agreed to a pre-trial settlement with the family.***

***The amount of the settlement paid to the family is being kept confidential.***

***However, the hospital did agree to apologize publicly to the family for what happened and in addition to spend \$1,250,000 over the next five years for expanded training of the emergency room staff.***

SUPERIOR COURT  
KENT COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND  
February 1, 2010

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The hospital's lawyers were prepared to argue that the EKG's computerized readout of "abnormal" was not definitive enough to change the overall assessment that the patient was not in need of immediate attention and care.

The family's lawyers were prepared to argue, on the other hand, that the patient's presenting signs and symptoms were a clear indication of an impending heart attack.

They were ready to point out that a cardiac monitor was never started for the patient as the nurse was ordered by the physician over the phone and that the patient was never actually seen by a physician before he died.

The lawsuit filed in the Superior Court, Kent County, Rhode Island settled before trial. **Woods v. Kent Hosp., 2010 WL 3440438 (Sup. Ct. Kent Co., Rhode Island, February 1, 2010).**