

Ice Packs Post-Knee Surgery: Nurses Found Negligent, But No Link To Complications.

The physician crossed out the portion of the hospital's standard post-op order form referring to "cold therapy" as his way of communicating the nurses that he did not want ice packs used on his patient's knee following knee replacement surgery.

The nurses, however, went ahead covered the bandaged knee with towels and applied ice packs.

When the surgeon was sued for malpractice over complications in the healing of the surgical wound, his lawyers alleged the complications were caused by the nurses' negligence in ignoring or misinterpreting the doctor's orders.

A physician is not liable for the negligence of nurses over whom the physician has no control.

However, there still must be proof of a cause-and-effect link between the nurses' negligence and harm to the patient.

COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA
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The Court of Appeals of Georgia agreed it is negligence for nurses not to follow the physician's orders. However, the physician himself testified he made no mention of the ice packs in the chart because he saw no real potential for complications. Negligent or not, there was no direct link between the nurse's actions and delayed healing, in the court's opinion. ***Moss v. Weiss***, ___ S.E. 2d ___, 2005 WL 2432566 (Ga. App., October 4, 2005).