
Pediatric Apnea Monitor

The Court of Appeals of Georgia stated recently that it is the responsibility of the nursing staff to ascertain that an electronic device monitoring a patient's condition is functioning correctly, and to respond appropriately when an alarm sounds. This is true even when a family member is camped out in the room with the patient.

It is the responsibility of a hospital's nursing staff to see that a pediatric apnea monitor is switched to the "on" position, and to respond rapidly and competently if the alarm sounds.

A proper response to a monitor alarm includes having the crash cart already stocked with the items needed in the event of an emergency.

COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA, 1997.

The court was not able to explain how the jury came to a verdict that the hospital was not liable. The child had an apneic event at home, was revived by the parents, was brought to the emergency room and was admitted for observation with an order for a pediatric apnea monitor. The mother awoke in the middle of the night, found her child blue from cyanosis, summoned a nurse, but the child could not be revived and died. The parents' lawsuit claimed the nurses had not checked to see that the monitor was "on," did not respond to the alarm and did not have the right supplies on the crash cart. Although one or more of these factors was the reason the child died, the court nevertheless elected not to overrule the jury. Dent vs. Memorial Hospital of Adel, Inc., 490 S.E. 2d 509 (Ga. App., 1997).

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