

Language Barrier: Nurse, Physician Not Able To Take Medical History, Faulted For Infant's Death.

The uncle accompanied the one-week-old infant and his mother in the ambulance to the hospital's E.R.

Neither the mother or the uncle spoke English very well. A nurse tried to get a medical history from the uncle, but he could only communicate with broken English and gestures.

When the uncle pointed and tapped on the infant's chest the nurse asked him if the child had stopped breathing. The nurse charted that the uncle replied that he did not know.

A first-year resident physician in pediatrics also attempted to obtain a medical history but had no more success than the nurse.

The infant was simply discharged home with the family, without the nurse or physician obtaining an interpreter to get a more adequate history.

The judge awarded the parents \$400,000 from the hospital for the negligence of the E.R. nurse and the resident physician.

If they had found someone to interpret for them, more likely than not they would have appreciated the seriousness of the infant's condition, would not have discharged the infant without treatment and the child would still be alive.

SUPERIOR COURT
PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND
May 1, 2009

The child stopped breathing at home four hours later and was rushed to the hospital again.

This time a diagnosis was made of an apneic event triggered by acute tracheobronchitis and bronchiolitis consistent with respiratory syncytial virus. The infant was placed on life support in pediatric intensive care, but unfortunately died four days later.

The judge in the Superior Court, Providence County, Rhode Island faulted the E.R. nurse and physician for not obtaining an adequate medical history. An interpreter was obviously required to be able go get an adequate history, which would have led to the child being kept at the hospital for treatment, not sent home. **Castillo-Monterroso v. Rhode Island Hosp., 2009 WL 5893830 (Sup. Ct. Providence Co., Rhode Island, May 1, 2009).**