

## **Narcotics: Death Blamed On Nurses' Failure To Monitor.**

The patient had a CT scan which traced his flank pain to a kidney stone and urine backed up in his right kidney.

The physicians began ordering significant doses of narcotics for pain management and IV saline for hydration to help him pass the stone.

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***The nurses' progress notes over his final eight hours stated the patient was "resting quietly."***

***The nurses were looking in on him regularly through the night but no vital signs or O<sub>2</sub> sats were obtained.***

***The patient was found unresponsive at 4:48 a.m. and was dead an hour later.***

***The autopsy tied the death to IV Demerol and Dilaudid.***

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NEVADA

March 19, 2009

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The deceased' family's lawsuit in the US District Court for the District of Nevada resulted in a verdict of \$1,574,000.

The thrust of the family's lawsuit was that the patient's nurses failed to take vital signs or obtain oxygen saturations after the patient had received repeated large doses of analgesics with the tendency to depress respirations.

The O<sub>2</sub> sat reportedly dropped from 96% to 91% after the first 2 mg dose of IV Dilaudid, the patient having received 50 mg of Demerol IV push two hours earlier, eight hours before being found unresponsive.

The nurses were also faulted for failing to realize that a moderately obese patient can be more susceptible to respiratory depression, heightening the nurse's legal duty to do more than just look in on the patient. **Butts v. Universal Health Services**, 2009 WL 1046343 (D. Nev., March 19, 2009).