

Pitocin With Cytotec: Jury Rules Nurse Must Watch For Uterine Hyper-Stimulation.

A jury in the Superior Court, Essex County, New Jersey, returned a verdict of \$11, 697, 273.99 for an infant and her family after the infant was born with severe hypoxic brain damage.

The jury ruled the ob/gyn physician 67.4 % and the labor and delivery nurse 32.6% liable for payment of the damages.

The physician used a dose of 50 micrograms of Cytotec intravaginally to induce labor. Not quite four hours later the labor and delivery nurse started Pitocin and gradually increased the infusion rate.

Three hours after she started the Pitocin the nurse discontinued it because of ominous signs she saw on the monitor. She began trying to locate the physician, who apparently was sleeping in the physician's lounge. The baby was delivered by c-section two hours and ten minutes after the Pitocin was stopped.

The physician was faulted for ordering Pitocin less than four hours after "off-label" use of Cytotec to induce labor. It is a stomach-ulcer medication with a side-effect of stimulating uterine contractions.

The drug manufacturer reportedly settled with the family for \$2,000,000 more out of court for failing to provide label or package-insert warnings about all the known dangers of mixing Cytotec with Pitocin.

The labor and delivery nurse was faulted for going against hospital rules by starting the Pitocin too soon, less than four hours after the Cytotec, for failing to appreciate the risk and danger to the fetus from uterine hyper-stimulation and for failing to watch the monitor closely enough.

The physician and the nurse were both faulted for inexcusable delay in starting the c-section. **Moeltner v. Rubio, 2007 WL 2246846 (Sup. Ct., Essex Co., New Jersey, March 6, 2007).**