

Post-Operative Nursing: ICU Nurse Ruled Not Negligent.

The patient was in the hospital's ICU recovering after radical neck dissection and laryngectomy surgery for advanced laryngeal cancer.

At 8:00 a.m. the morning after surgery the ICU nurse noticed that the both of the patient's feet were mottled, possibly a sign of circulatory problems. The nurse promptly contacted the surgeon and reported the situation. The surgeon came in at noon, saw the patient and asked a vascular surgeon to consult on the case.

Two hours went by. The nurse called his office and was told the vascular surgeon was on his way. The nurse got the family physician to come in. He ordered arterial Doppler studies.

The vascular surgeon finally arrived at 8:00 p.m. By then the circulation had become so bad in the patient's legs that he could not be saved from having to have bilateral above-the-knee amputations.

The jury in the Circuit Court, Prince William County, Virginia ruled the ICU nurse was not negligent and the hospital was not liable to the patient for damages.

The nurse monitored her patient, communicated what was going on to the physicians and did all that was expected as advocate for her patient. **Confidential v. Confidential, 2010 WL 4971913 (Cir. Ct. Prince William Co., Virginia, July 21, 2010).**