

LEGAL EAGLE EYE NEWSLETTER

For the Nursing Profession

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IM Injection In Buttocks Causes Sciatic Nerve Injury: Court Finds No Negligence By The Nurse.

The patient was seen in the emergency room for a rash. The physician ordered a Benadryl injection. The nurse injected the Benadryl into the patient's right buttock. The patient's sciatic nerve was injured and he experienced symptoms in his right leg and foot which were not specified in the court record.

The patient sued the hospital as the nurse's employer. The court referred the case to a medical review panel. Based on the nurse's documentation the panel concluded there was no negligence. The hospital then petitioned the court to dismiss the lawsuit. The patient's only defense to the petition was that he was not interviewed by the medical review panel for his side of the story. The court dismissed the lawsuit.

The nurse's documentation indicated the injection was given in the proper location, the right ventral gluteal muscle. Sciatic nerve injury is a known potential, although rare, complication of a properly administered IM injection in the buttocks.

The patient had no medical expert's opinion to contradict the review panel's conclusion there was no negligence by the nurse.

SUPREME COURT OF ALASKA, 2000.

The Supreme Court of Alaska agreed with the medical review panel. The nurse's documentation was undisputed she administered the injection properly in an appropriate anatomical location. Sciatic nerve injury is a known but rare complication of an injection properly given in the patient's buttocks. Complications alone do not make a nurse negligent.

The medical review panel's report ruled the "ventrogluteal muscle" is a proper location for an IM injection. The court agreed there is no such muscle. But the court did not fault the nurse over the panel's report containing an apparent faulty transcription of "ventral gluteal muscle." ***Gerber v. Juneau Bartlett Memorial Hospital, 2 P. 3d 74 (Alaska, 2000).***