

Medical Errors in Staging Pressure Ulcers (Bedsores) Can Compromise Recovery

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As we mentioned in yesterday's post, patients in hospitals and nursing homes can be prone to [pressure ulcers](#), often called "bedsores." The ulcers develop from prolonged pressure on an area of skin, which reduces blood supply to the area. Over time, the skin can break down and form an ulcer.

Bedsores can range from mildly irritated areas of skin to deep tissue damage. In order to treat the pressure ulcer, it must be properly staged. Healthcare providers use a numeric staging system to characterize pressure ulcers based on wound depth, visibility of the wound bed, and the degree of tissue loss.

Although bedsores are fairly common, so are staging mistakes. For instance, wounds with measurable depth (tissue loss) are commonly categorized as a Stage 1 pressure ulcer.

However, that is wrong. If a pressure ulcer has any tissue loss, it is at least a Stage 2.

Another common mistake is improper stage classification of Stage 2 and Stage 3 pressure ulcers. Mistakes occur when a full thickness pressure ulcer is not properly identified.

Unstageable ulcers also give rise to improper staging. An unstageable ulcer is a full thickness wound whose wound bed is not visible. The wound remains unstageable until the base of wound becomes visible. This usually requires debridement of slough or eschar. Once the wound bed becomes visible, the numeric staging resumes. A common error occurs when providers assign a numeric stage (3 or 4) to a pressure ulcer without a visible wound bed.

Unfortunately, incorrect staging can directly impact healing of the pressure ulcer because treatment is based on the stage of the wound. If the wound is not staged properly, the patient does not receive proper treatment and the wound progresses, becoming a vicious cycle.

In addition, the frequency and type of wound care treatment, nutritional supplements, and surgical debridement are all based, to some extent, on the stage of the pressure ulcer.

Therefore, it is important for health professionals to carefully and thoroughly evaluate every case of bedsore. In some cases, the failure to do so could constitute medical malpractice.

If you believe that you may have suffered from medical malpractice, it is important to speak with an attorney who specializes in this area as soon as possible. Upon meeting with a medical malpractice attorney, you will be asked to explain what happened in as much detail as possible.

It is helpful to bring a copy of your medical records as well. The attorney will then be able to discuss your legal options with you.

The Baltimore medical malpractice lawyers of [Hyatt & Weber, P.A.](#) understand the potentially devastating impact of a serious medical mistake. If you or someone you love has been injured due to someone else's negligence, we are here to help. Our Baltimore injury attorneys are experienced and dedicated to pursuing the compensation you deserve.

To better understand your rights, contact us today at leads@hwlaw.com or 410-777-5707 for a free consultation.