

Bed Sore FAQs

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM A NURSING HOME LAWYER

Are the development of bed sores at a nursing home considered to be a form of nursing home abuse?

The Administration on Aging, defines elder abuse as the *intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult.*

Obviously, using the government's definition, many forms of mistreatment– intentional and negligent may be considered abusive. In nursing homes, negligent acts by staff account for the majority of injuries and deaths. Nonetheless, there are situations where the intentional acts by a facility in general or by an individual staff member may similarly result in an injury.

Although bed sores (alternatively referred to as: pressure sore, pressure ulcer or decubitus ulcer) may not necessarily be associated with an intentional act, there are many situations where a bed sore developed because of a conscious decision by nursing home staff to ignore patient needs such as: incontinence, shifting patients in bed and ensuring sufficient nutrition and hydration. Similarly, some nursing homes may intentionally contribute to the development of bed sores when they fail to educate staff regarding preventative measure and treatment programs.

The sad reality is that bed sores can be just as harmful to nursing home patients compared with any other type of abuse–inflicted injury. Nursing home patients who develop bed sores must endure a long, painful and de–humanizing treatment and recovery process.

Steps to take after you notice the development of bed sores during an admission to a nursing home:

- Obtain medical treatment for your loved one immediately
- Document the injury, record dates, times, staff names and photograph or videotape the wound itself
- Contact your state’s Department of Health and file a complaint related to improper patient care

Resources:

National Elder Abuse Incidence Study

Nursing Home Injury Laws: A compilation of State laws and agency resources

National Center On Elder Abuse