

Nurses Lost to Back Injuries from Lifting Patients

Back Injury: The “Kiss of Death” for Nursing Career: Ironically, three months before a patient lifting injury left me disabled, I received a letter of acclaim from a physician after his patient proclaimed I had saved her life. I had. I was an expert nurse. “One of the best” according to the hospital’s CEO, at the pinnacle of my career, ended by a serious back injury. Two spinal fusion surgeries later, after 19 applications for non-lifting positions, I was terminated. The doors were slammed in my face. I was even passed over in favor of a nurse with less education and seniority. A back injury is known as “the kiss of death” for a nurse’s career. That proved true for me, as it has for many, many other nurses.

Rebecca Rhoads, RN, BSN. Cedar, Michigan.



Nurse’s Dream Job Lost to Spinal Injury: Before my back injury, I was a nurse for 25 years. I had my dream job for 21 years working in labor and delivery and helping manage the department. It has been nine years and I still cannot go through the day without making adjustments because of the injury. Work injuries do not handicap you only during work hours but also affect how you live. Chronic pain, depression, loss of self-esteem, and job loss disrupt an entire community. Employers do not rehire nurses with back injuries. Losing knowledgeable well-trained nurses to injuries from lifting patients can be avoided with the right equipment and training. Sadly, Dora L. Whittaker, RN. Quilcene, Washington.



Nurse’s Nightmare from Back Injury: I was a unit manager in a nursing home when my nursing career was halted by a back injury from lifting a very large man. I was forbidden to continue as a charge nurse because the job description included a requirement to lift. I left and took another job without lifting until the date of my surgery when my employer let me go due to “financial issues.” I am unable to work because of my injury. COBRA is \$625 per month and is running out. Every insurance company has denied me because of my pre-existing condition. Something has to be done to stop the nightmare of back injuries from lifting patients!

Susan Epstein, RN, BSN. Brookfield, Connecticut.



Bedside Nurse Removed by Spinal Injury: I loved caring for acutely ill patients, but my bedside career was cut short after only ten years due to a severe spinal injury from lifting patients. I tried returning to work with a heavy back brace with metal stays, but the pain caused by lifting and moving a 425 pound patient was too great. I had spine fusion surgery with placement of cadaver bone grafts and screws. It is my back, not my brain, that was damaged. But with permanent lifting restrictions, I was terminated because I could no longer manually lift and move patients. I am left with pain and many limitations in my daily life. Safe patient lift equipment could have kept this nurse healthy and at the bedside. Anne Hudson, RN, BSN. Coos Bay, Oregon. Founder of WING USA.



Work Injured Nurses’ Group USA (WING USA) www.wingusa.org

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