

NURSE: BED SORES EPIDEMIC AT TEXAS CITY NURSING HOME

Bed sores occurred in epidemic proportions at an Autumn Hills nursing home in Texas City, a nursing expert testified Tuesday in a nursing home murder trial.

Sarah Greene Burger, a registered nurse and employee of a Washington, D.C.-based nursing consultant, said she based her opinion on an audit of Autumn Hills records dating from Jan. 1 through Nov. 20, 1978.

Of 56 patients whose records she studied, Burger said she found they suffered 261 bed sores.

Of those bed sores, or decubitus as they are called in medical terminology, 64 percent developed in the nursing home.

The rest originated before the patients entered Autumn Hills.

"From what I have read of Autumn Hills, this represents an epidemic of decubitus," she said.

Burger's testimony came in a murder-by-neglect trial against Autumn Hills Convalescent Centers Inc. and five of its current and former employees.

They are charged in the Nov. 20, 1978, death of Elnora Breed. The 87-year-old woman died after living 47 days at an Autumn Hills home in Texas City.

The defense claims she died of cancer.

Burger testified she worked four years at the Washington Home for Incurables.

"We had a very low rate there," she said of bed sores.

Bed sores are breakdowns in tissue that occur when immobile patients remain in the same position for long periods. The breakdown occurs from constant pressure on the skin and underlying tissues.

Burger said one patient, a woman, developed 14 bed sores after entering the Autumn Hills Home.

The patient, she said, was younger than most nursing home residents and she was fairly mobile.

"I have never seen this kind of development of decubitus in a patient in this condition," Burger said.

The consultant said bed sores in almost all cases are preventable and are a sign of poor patient care.