

## Eli's Rehab Report

### News: Act Fast When Patients Alert You To Problems

#### Two patients' proactive stance stopped a bad therapist in her tracks.

Most therapists give up their valuable time and energy to ensure patients thrive, but not every therapist has the best intentions -- and your patients need to know they can turn to you when something doesn't feel right.

Case in point: The **Iowa Board of Physical and Occupational Therapy** has charged **Alesha Hansen**, an occupational therapist at **Mercy Medical Center** in Dubuque, with engaging in unethical conduct, misrepresenting her profession, and "attempting to obtain or possess ... controlled substances without lawful authority" after two of her patients reported her suspicious behavior.

For instance, Hansen worked with one patient in the patient's home over a period of one week. After each visit, the patient had a smaller amount of prescribed pain relievers than before the visit. Hansen visited the patient several times after discharge with the same outcome.

Similarly, Hansen provided in-home care to the second patient for a period of several months -- and the patient's prescribed hydrocodone started to go missing. Hansen also visited after the patient no longer needed therapy services and would frequently ask to use the bathroom, which was where the medication was stored.

Problem: The patients' families didn't immediately share their suspicions with Mercy Medical, which means Hansen could've stolen medications from many other patients who weren't as cognizant of their pill counts.

Lesson learned: You must ensure that your patients feel safe coming to you when they suspect something might be wrong. Educate each of them about the best and quickest ways to communicate any concerns or worries they have about your staff -- lest your practice pay the price for one employee's bad deeds.