



FACTS ABOUT MEDICAL ERRORS:

What is a medical error? The Institutes of Medicine defines medical error as "*the failure to complete a planned action as intended or the use of a wrong plan to achieve an aim.*"

Some examples...

Medication errors (wrong dose, wrong drug, using drugs incompatible with each other, administering drugs to a patient with a known allergy) The FDA estimates 1.3 million people are injured annually due to medication errors.

Surgical errors: Performing the correct procedure on the wrong body part, performing the correct procedure on the wrong patient, objects left in the body after surgery, patient catching on fire during surgery. From the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality- "a chart review of 15,000 medical records in Colorado and Utah, found that **54 percent of surgical errors were preventable.**

Hospital Acquired Infections: Bloodstream infections, bacterial pneumonia, surgical site infections. The CDC estimates 1.7 million patients a year are affected, with 99,000 deaths.

Diagnostic Error: Misinterpreting diagnostic tests, failure to act on abnormal results.

Equipment Failure

Failure to Rescue

In 1999 the Institutes of Medicine estimated 44,000-98,000 patients annually die as a result of medical errors ("To Err is Human".) This decade-old statistic is still widely quoted. Truth is, we really don't know. In 2004 Healthgrades estimated 195,000 deaths per year caused by preventable medical errors. In 2009 Dr. Donald Berwick from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement estimates there are FIFTEEN MILLION injuries to patients per year.

(www.moneydrivenmedicine.org).

How do we fix the problem? Every patient in a hospital should have an advocate in a friend or family member at their bedside 24/7. American's should start demanding transparency, oversight and accountability in our health care system. Most errors are caused by communication problems, lack of information technology (ie: illegible handwriting), nurses overwhelmed with duties other than patient care, to generalize it, our health care system is not patient-centered.