

PLAYING IT SAFE HEALTH CARE



Avoiding Medical Malpractice

Active involvement with patients is the first step

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, 7,000 people die each year from medication errors in hospitals. Avoiding these serious mistakes starts with you, the health care professional.

Medical errors often occur during the performance of routine tasks, such as providing the wrong meal to a patient on a low-sodium diet. While some mistakes can be blamed on the complexities of today's health care system, many are due to poor provider-patient communication.

Where Errors Happen

Errors occur when medical care is executed incorrectly, or the wrong plan is initiated altogether. This care is typically provided in the following:

- Clinics
- Doctors' offices
- Emergency rooms
- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Operating rooms
- Outpatient surgery centers
- Patients' homes
- Pharmacies

These errors can involve the following:

- Diagnosis equipment
- Lab reports
- Medicines
- Surgery

Preventing Errors

The most important thing you can do to avoid errors—and a medical malpractice lawsuit—is to remain informed of every aspect of your patient's health care.

Medication Mistakes

Approximately 88 percent of medication errors involve the wrong dose or the wrong drug. Here are some tips to avoid medication mistakes:

- Making sure you are aware of every prescription and over-the-counter medication your patient is taking
- Staying up to date on your patient's known allergies to medications
- Making sure your handwriting on the prescription is legible
- Explaining directions in a patient-friendly fashion

These directions should include volume, frequency, foods, beverages and activities to avoid, total length of time, and any side effects that could occur.

Hospital Stays and Surgeries

- Before surgery, make sure you, the patient and the surgeon have reached a consensus on what will take place.
- Upon discharge, carefully explain the home treatment plan to your patient. Research shows that at discharge time, doctors think their patients understand more than they actually do.

Be safe and healthy on the job with these helpful tips provided by **Medical Society of Virginia Insurance Agency**.

A recent study found that when patients checked whether health care workers had washed their hands, the workers washed more frequently and used more soap.

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