



For you, your career, and your life

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To Avoid Medical Errors, Be Aware of Frequent Causes and Purpose of Protocols

Wrong-site surgery, medication mix-ups and diagnostic errors are among the medical mistakes that make headlines. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine report, "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System" heightened awareness of the scope and seriousness of medical errors. New guidelines for reporting and preventing medical errors have emerged as a result, including the 2004 Universal Protocol for Preventing Wrong Site, Wrong Procedure, Wrong Person Surgery, now required of all healthcare organizations accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). In addition, there have been numerous studies that identify the most frequent factors contributing to medical errors.

"Sentinel event" is a key term for referring to the most serious of medical errors. "Medical residents may or may have

encountered this terminology," says Genie Skypek, Ph.D., a Tampa-based licensed psychologist. "It's an adverse event in which death or serious harm to a patient has occurred. It's usually used to refer to

Root Causes of Sentinel Events (in order of prevalence)

- Communication
- Orientation/training
- Patient assessment
- Staffing
- Availability of info
- Competency/credentialing
- Procedural compliance
- Environmental safety/security
- Leadership
- Continuum of care
- Care planning
- Organizational culture

Source: Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, 1995-2004 events

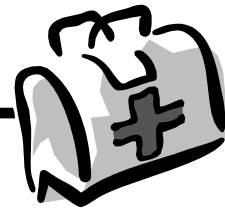
Dealing with mistakes, or the fear of making mistakes, can be a challenge for anyone. It can be especially challenging during your medical residency. Your Resident Assistance Program is here to provide counseling, coaching and an extra measure of support when you need it. Our goal is to help you become a more successful physician. We welcome you to get to know us. Call the Resident Assistance Program (RAP), 813-870-3344.

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events that are not at all expected or acceptable—for example, an operation on the wrong patient or wrong body part. Sentinel events trigger questions about how well an individual does their work and how well the system is designed to facilitate it."

Skypek, founder of The Skypek Group, has consulted with behavioral health

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***To make no mistakes is not
in the power of man; but
from their errors and
mistakes the wise and good
learn wisdom for the future.***

- Plutarch (46 AD - 120 AD)



Money Matters

Practical Ways to Avoid Money Management Mistakes

Managing money doesn't have to involve rigid rules, pinching pennies, and keeping a lot of records. There are some simple techniques you can follow.

First, decide what you want your money to do for you in the long and short term, create a workable spending plan, and then consistently follow through with your plan. How do you know if you are on the right track? Here are some pitfalls to avoid.

No Spending Plan

Where does the money go? If you can't answer this question, it's time to take critical look at your expenses. Give each expense a priority, and always take care of the essentials before the extras.

No Cash Reserve

Experts recommend a cash reserve of at least 50 percent of your family's annual income. This means developing good saving habits and self-restraint in spending. Knowing you have a safety margin of savings will also give you a feeling of security and greater peace of mind.

Too Much Use of Credit

Taking on too much credit card debt can sink your long-term financial plans. Know the real cost of credit terms. Be sure time installments fit into your budget and don't take on more than you can handle. And pay on time to keep your credit rating solid.

Get more money management tips from Muniz and Associates, 813-258-0033.

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Avoiding Medical Errors, *continued*

organizations in the area of accreditation compliance for 25 years. In her seminar "Preventing Medical Errors," Skypek addresses the root causes of sentinel events as identified and tracked by JCAHO.

"Once recognized, sentinel events in medical settings have prompted changes to protocols for a variety of procedures," says Skypek. "They have also brought about improvements in such things as the software systems used to collect patient information and the systems that facilitate intra-staff communications. Pharmacy software also has additional built-in safeguards against errors. But those are just part of the solution. There has to be a shift from the traditional view of blaming an individual for a problem. We need to look beyond the individual to the process. Then processes can be designed so that individuals can't make a mistake."

"When people are asked to comply with new rules, they need to understand the purpose behind those rules," Skypek continues. "Some people may be offended by universal protocols. They see them as something that impinges on their power. What's important is that the protocols are designed to facilitate the right process in high-stress situations with a lot of distractions, because that's where errors tend to be made."

First Professionals Insurance Company, (a subsidiary of FPIC Insurance Group, Inc.) is another organization that offers courses to medical professionals on how to prevent medical errors. At the core of its curriculum is professional liability claim data compiled by the Physician Insurers Association of America (PIAA). "Few medical errors are attributed to faulty medical judgment, but rather system failures inherent to healthcare delivery," the program's course description states. Among the topics the continuing education program covers are root causes and preventive measures for wrong-site surgery, surgical complications, errors in diagnosing acute myocardial infarction and breast cancer, and dangerous abbreviations (Q.D. vs. Q.I.D., for example).

By learning from the mistakes of others, paying attention to potentially error-prone situations and understanding the reasons behind new guidelines and protocols, doctors can become more proficient and successful in even the most demanding settings.

Next issue: The Legal Implications of Medical Errors

Resources

- Agency for HealthCare Research and Quality - www.ahrq.gov/
- Look-alike/sound-alike drug list - www.jcaho.org/accredited+organizations/patient+safety/05+npsg/lasa.pdf
- Executive Summary, Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century, Institute of Medicine, 2001 - www.nap.edu/execsumm/0309072808.html#sum
- The Skypek Group - skypek.home.mindspring.com
- First Professionals Insurance Company - <http://firstprofessionals.com/index.html>
- RAP Newsletter Archives www.woodassociates.net/rap