

## **Medical Errors "Admit, Convince, Compensate and Avoid"**

### **Thamer A Hamdan**

MB, ChB, FRCS, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Chancellor of Basrah University, Basrah, Iraq.

Medical errors can be reduced to the minimum possibly by precautions, over-consciousness and guarding against the unexpected, particularly, anatomical malformation and congenital anomalies.

Sadly, it is impossible to take medical errors out of the medical dictionary even in the best centers on this earth. The outcome of the medical errors depends on the magnitude of these errors. It ranges from no bad effect, minor damage to serious damage or even death.

Sometimes, mistakes are avoidable; so the surgeons are guilty by the sin of omission or commission. But, on the other hand, they are unavoidable to a great extent or they are even expected; in that case, we can say the surgeons might be blameless.

Patients, staff and facilities may contribute to the occurrence of medical errors, therefore, it is vital to spot who is behind the error; who is to be blamed, and who will pay the price.

All of us head for the minimum possible of errors in his career; however, this dream cannot be easily achieved.

It is shameful that so many avoidable errors appear in some surgeon's practices like wrong patient, wrong diagnosis, wrong level, wrong incision or wrong technique. What might be worse is that more than one of the above-cited errors may be recorded in one patient.

Early detection of errors is more than mandatory; this will probably help in reducing the harmful outcome. Next to recognition, is notification and documentation. Immediate and perfect treatment might be needed to guard against or to ameliorate the harmful sequelae.

Proper assessment of the environment surrounding the event and establishment of an investigation team will help in spotting what is behind and who is behind the medical errors. Sharp line should be drawn between complications of the pathology or the operation performed, and that of malpractice.

Probably, equal to recognition of medical errors, is how to behave, how to rectify the weak points, how to avoid falling in the same or similar trap again, and on top of



everything is how to behave with victims of the medical errors and how to convince the patient and his relatives; all these above questions need wisdom and patience.

Certainly, human beings are not alike; their response is very variable, some are cooperative but others are tedious and troublesome. Probably, the situation is smoother in the developed communities, but in our locality, it is not so. From official and religious point of view, disclosure is mandatory even if no harm was noticed.

In our locality, this practice is virtually impossible. On the contrary, it might initiate a situation worse than the medical error itself. So we are really in a puzzle what to do and how to behave.

Logically speaking, we should not be very frank in telling what happen in a strict way, but it is wise to go around the point in a gentle and smooth way. We have to convince our patient and his relatives in a reasonable way and it is not bad to offer an acceptable compensation for the patient satisfaction. The magnitude of the compensation is directly related to the damage inflicted.

Compensation may keep the surgeons totally away from the expected nightmares and may help in taking out the feeling of guilt which is very much expected from the honest surgeon.

From the Islamic perspective, it is mandatory to compensate for any damage one might be responsible for.

Finally, if you do not want to pay any compensation, you have to learn how to avoid medical errors and how to master your field. This can only be achieved by strong theoretical and practical background. Awareness of the types of potential medical errors may also help in avoiding them. Please, do not forget to consult your colleagues whether they are above or below your standard.

