

## Medical Malpractice Suits: Death By Medicine

A recent report has found that Americans are more frightened of dying at the hands of their doctor than they are of a plane crash. The overwhelming majority of those who participated in the survey said that information about malpractice suits and medical errors would be the single most deciding factor in trusting a healthcare provider. These people must have heard that medical errors cause more deaths in the United States every year than car accidents, AIDS, or breast cancer. In fact, for the airline industry to parallel medical errors in mortality rates a 280-person jet would have to crash every day of the year. This would account for the over 100,000 people who die annually due to complications in medical care, not to mention the nearly 2 million who are maimed and disabled. This malady is called iatrogenic disease, a disease that is a direct result of medical care. What is causing this epidemic? Many agree that the cause is over-treatment. More medicine is administered than necessary, people are hospitalized unnecessarily, and doctors prescribe drugs instead of healthy lifestyle choices. This is a major problem and it shows no signs of stopping. In the ten year period between 1983 and 1993 the incidence of death by medical error, or iatrogenic disease, jumped 260% overall and 850% among patients receiving outpatient care. These statistics could only be an indication of the true numbers, because medical error is not often recorded on death certificates. Some people blame the increased number of deaths on a greater number of prescriptions, but the number of prescriptions issued has increased less than 40% in 10 years, compared with the 260% increased death rate. Instead, some doctors blame increased usage of anesthesia, especially among those receiving outpatient care. Medical malpractice insurance rates have been skyrocketing, causing a small crisis among doctors who must be insured in order to practice. They complain of medical malpractice lawsuits going out of control, large cities awarding record settlements, too many people filing claims. Well can you blame people for filing claims? Doctors must be held accountable for their prescriptions, and if a doctor writes you a prescription that hurts you they deserve to be taken to court! This is truly an epidemic, and it must be stopped by holding irresponsible healthcare providers responsible. One in five Americans has experienced medical errors directly or has a family member who has suffered a medical error. If you feel you have suffered unnecessarily at the hands of a doctor, seek legal council and work it out with a lawyer.

## About the Author

Information about the faculty, academic programs, research, as well as its health.

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