

US and Canadian physicians' attitudes and experiences regarding disclosing errors to patients.

July 10, 2008

Gallagher TH, Waterman AD, Garbutt J, et al. US and Canadian physicians' attitudes and experiences regarding disclosing errors to patients. Arch Intern Med. 2006;166(15):1605-11.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/us-and-canadian-physicians-attitudes-and-experiences-regarding-disclosing-errors-patients>

This study surveyed US and Canadian physicians and sought to elucidate factors influencing the likelihood of physician support for full disclosure of errors. The majority of respondents had disclosed a serious error to a patient and reported that the experience was positive. Nearly all respondents supported disclosing both minor and serious errors. Perceived risk of malpractice lawsuits did not affect physicians' likelihood of disclosing errors, and two-thirds of respondents agreed that fully disclosing errors reduced the risk of malpractice. Despite these beliefs, a [companion study](#) by the same authors found that physicians tend to "choose their words carefully" when discussing errors with patients, often opting to discuss "adverse events" rather than explicitly admit errors. Gallagher and Levinson have [previously](#) argued in favor of developing guidelines and training physicians in error disclosure.