

## Disclosing medical errors to patients: it's not what you say, it's what they hear.

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Wu AW, Huang I-C, Stokes S, et al. Disclosing medical errors to patients: it's not what you say, it's what they hear. J Gen Intern Med. 2009;24(9):1012-7. doi:10.1007/s11606-009-1044-3.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/disclosing-medical-errors-patients-its-not-what-you-say-its-what-they-hear>

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[Error disclosure](#) is an increasingly important [skill](#) for clinicians and was [endorsed](#) by the National Quality Forum as one of its "safe practices." Past studies have discussed the impact of error disclosure on [malpractice liability](#), while toolkits and [web resources](#) have become increasingly available to guide providers. This study used a volunteer community sample of patients who were asked to observe error disclosure [practices](#) by physicians. Investigators found that patients responded more favorably to physicians who apologized and took responsibility for an error and that their perception of this interaction, rather than the actual words expressed, was more important. The authors advocate for continued error disclosure training among providers with further study of the impact of this training on patients' experiences in receiving such disclosure. A past AHRQ WebM&M [perspective](#) and [conversation](#) discuss the science and systems around error disclosure.