

# Ethical and legal implications of medical errors

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Hiding a medical error from patients violates ethical codes. Nevertheless, medical practitioners fail to disclose the truth to their patients. Most physicians believe that in the medical profession, errors are forbidden and if they reveal them they could damage their professional reputations (Selbst, 2003). Others also believe that by revealing these errors to the patients as ethically required might reduce the number of referrals they receive thus lowering their income. Moreover, disclosing the truth about medical errors may also increase patient anxiety and erode their trust in the future. In addition, most medical professionals also conceal a medical error from patients because of the fear to be punished. They believe that if they reveal an error to a patient they may face a malpractice lawsuit that could lead to dismissal and hinder their career advancement (Kapp, 1997). However, although most physicians fear to disclose the truth about their mistakes to their patients, it is morally upright to do so. The fear of being blamed should not be a reason for hiding the truth from the patient (Wu AW et al, 1997). Moreover, physicians only face more lawsuits when they try to hide the mistakes from their patients who later on realize the truth through other means. Therefore, to reduce medical errors, physicians should address this fear and its consequences.