

Medical Errors and Disclosure

Medical Errors and Disclosure

1. Introduction

- A medical error is a preventable adverse event or near miss in patient care.
- Disclosure is the ethical and often legal practice of informing patients when errors occur.

2. Types of Errors

- **Diagnostic errors:** missed, delayed, or wrong diagnoses.
- **Medication errors:** wrong drug, dose, route, or timing.
- **Systemic errors:** failures in processes, communication, or equipment.

3. Why Disclosure Matters

- Respects patient autonomy and the right to honest information.
- Maintains trust and can reduce litigation when handled openly.
- Supports learning that prevents recurrence.

4. Principles of Disclosure

- Communicate promptly, clearly, and with empathy.
- State the facts, express regret, and explain corrective steps.
- Document the event and disclosure accurately.

5. Error Prevention

- **Just culture:** focuses on system improvement rather than individual blame.
- Incident reporting and root cause analysis identify underlying causes.
- Checklists, double-checks, and technology reduce error rates.