



Medical Malpractice... By the Numbers

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.”

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

65,000 to 200,000 The minimum annual number of deaths due to medical *accidents*, according to hospital records. For comparison: The annual total of all other causes of accidental death is 98,000, of which 46,000 are from auto crashes and 11,000 are from workplace accidents.

25,000 to 120,000 The minimum number of the above deaths due to *negligence*. That is, deaths caused by medical *malpractice* each year.

0.8% to 1% The percentage of hospital patients who become victims of malpractice.

2.9% The percentage of victims of malpractice, as reflected in medical records, who file claims.

4:1 The ratio of injuries and deaths caused by malpractice in hospitals to that reflected in medical records. (In other words, many errors go unrecorded.) This means that the number of malpractice deaths and injuries is probably about four times that reflected in the numbers above.

4.8% The percentage of physicians responsible for half of the malpractice claims filed in the U.S. Just 1.7% of physicians were responsible for 27.5% of all malpractice awards.

5% The percentage of patients who are victims of malpractice who receive some payment through a negotiated settlement of the claim

1/3 of 1% The percentage of patients who are victims of malpractice whose cases go to trial.

1/10 of 1% The percentage of patients who are victims of malpractice who win a trial verdict in their favor.

70% The percentage of malpractice awards reduced by the court.

1:4 The ratio of total malpractice premiums to total economic losses suffered by victims of malpractice. In other words: Doctors and hospitals avoid paying 80% of the economic harm their errors inflict on patients and their families.

Sources

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