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[**Hiding Medical Malpractice Sometimes Just Fine According to Many Doctors**](http://www.azmedicalmalpracticeblog.com/2012/02/hiding-medical-malpractice-sometimes-just-fine-according-to-many-doctors/)

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A 2009 survey of more than 1,800 doctors published in *Health Affairs* found that 1/3 of them did not completely agree that doctors should admit when they make a medical mistake.  20% said they had not disclosed an instance of medical malpractice because they were afraid of being sued.  While those revelations may seem shocking, it is not so much of a surprise for those of us who handle medical malpractice litigation on a regular basis.

Even in what appear to be the most clear cut cases, doctors are often at best reluctant to accept the fact that someone suffered harm because they made a mistake.  Nobody wants to admit they have done something wrong, and certainly nobody wants to get sued, but failing to reveal a mistake is inexcusable, at least according to Dr. Arthur Kaplan, a well known medical ethicist at the University of Pennsylvania.  Not only is it unethical, failing to reveal the cause of a patient’s unexpected outcome can affect future treatment and result in additional harm.  That’s just plain unacceptable.

The good news is that the doctors who engage in and approve of such conduct are in the minority.  I believe all health care providers want to help their patients and provide good care.  But a doctor needs to admit when something goes wrong because of a medical error; not because it’s the ethical thing to do, but because it advances the interest of the patient.  That should be paramount over a doctor’s self-interest.

The incentive for a doctor to make it difficult, if not impossible, for a patient to determine he or she has been harmed by medical malpractice is substantial.  Doctors who settle claims or have judgments entered against them must report those outcomes, which can make it more expensive to obtain insurance or more difficult to obtain privileges to practice at hospitals.  It will probably show up when a prospective patient searches for the doctor’s credentials at the state medical board.  But those who are sworn to first do no harm must hold themselves to the highest standard.

Unfortunately, when it comes to medical mistakes, many doctors have developed an “us” versus “them” mentality with their patients.  Until the medical profession purges its members of the belief that covering up mistakes is acceptable, patients have good reason to be skeptical of whose interests their doctors really care about.

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