

Email to Oz Media

Quoting the newsletter from *Dr. Gerry Clum, President of Life Chiropractic College West.*

Sunday morning, August 9, 2009, in the City by the Bay comes the Sunday edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*...got the coffee, dog has been let out and it is time for a good long morning read of the paper...Headlines above the fold, front page, we find "Dead by Mistake: Avoidable Errors Kept Out of View"...after the headline, there are three full pages, PAGES, not columns, detailing the toll in human and economic terms of medical error. Other sections of tri-fold include "State Requires Timely Reporting of Medical Errors" and "Secrecy Shields Medical Mishaps from Public View".

The Sunday *Chron* wasn't big enough to handle all the information and it spilled over into Monday's edition with "Routine Complications from Surgery Turns Fatal" and "Hospitals Slow to Use Technology to Halt Errors".

Visit [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com), in the search box, enter "medical errors" and you can get all the details absent the impact of these article being laid out across the width of a two-page spread.

In enormous contrast Australia's trustworthy news media has for decades maintained an informed silence about the full extent of that harm. Guesstimates about annual rates of medical harm vary from the extremely odd figure of 259 provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and quoted by the spokesperson for the federal Minister for Health.

Shortly after a government Report was quoted as claiming 4,500 in-hospital deaths due to medical mistakes. A previous study put the figure at 18,000 and Archer's meta-analysis of medical literature guesstimated 50,000 deaths p.a. in Australia arising from medical treatment as distinct from the patient's disorder The collective term for that harm is iatrogenesis (iatro physician, genesis create). Our road toll is around 2,000+ yet receives far more attention. Here are a few of the numerous quotes received by key media outlets.

Archer used some of the public domain medical literature to guesstimate Australia's annual iatrogenic toll to be about 50,000. "An epidemic which could effect up to 750,000 people and result in 50,000 deaths annually deserves to be a top research priority." Archer, John. *Bad Medicine: How Safe Is Modern Medicine.* Simon and Schuster Australia, East Roseville, NSW. 1995. P184

That also deserved, but never got top news media coverage.

In 2004 researches, including 2 PhDs, 2 MDs and 1 MD ND, claimed to have searched **all available** medical data about iatrogenesis. They guesstimated the US iatrogenic toll as being 783,936 pa. They concluded that; "It is now evident that the American medical system is the leading cause of death and injury in the US." As We See It. *Death by Medicine, Le Magazine* March 2004 [http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2004/mar2004\\_aws\\_i\\_death\\_01.htm](http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2004/mar2004_aws_i_death_01.htm)

These mortality statistics confirm the existence of an epidemic of potentially preventable iatrogenic death in the United States. Medical Error What Do We Know? What Do We Do? By Marilyn M. Rosenthal / Kathleen M. Sutcliffe

Unlike the various flue epidemics, the full spectrum of the iatrogenic epidemic has for decades been constantly continual, apparently amassing a staggering cumulative toll. Based on decades of prior medial harm, iatrogenesis it is to some degree, predictable. Predictability would allow Australia's media to give adequate forewarning to the apparent thousands of impending victims of the iatrogenic epidemic. Not to do so invites great risk to each year's thousands of potential victims.

Questions in state and federal parliament confirmed the government is ignorant of total medical harm. As the sponsor of most medical treatment, Australia's governments share responsibility to ensure that the true extent of serious iatrogenic harm is 1) truthfully reported 2) collected 3) collated 4) published.

In what seems to be a horrific apparently informed decision not to inform the public about ‘an epidemic of potentially preventable iatrogenic death’ Australia’s governments and news media have failed to forewarning impending victims.

Like tobacco companies, evidence based Medicine does not evidence the full extent of medical harm. Awaiting such data from medicine prior to forewarning, is self defeating. The following email from ‘Aunty’ serves as a good example.

Dear Mr McKibbin

Thank you for your email of 9 July which has been referred to me.

As explained in our initial response, ABC medical stories are usually be based on new research studies or information provided by peak bodies, or credible research that has been peer reviewed. Should such research be released warning of an epidemic with regard to iatrogenic deaths, it is likely that the ABC would provide coverage of the issue.

Thank you again for writing to the ABC. Yours sincerely  
Denise Musto Investigations Manager Audience & Consumer Affairs

**Why does your organisation maintain absolute silence about the full spectrum of medical harm?**

Sincerely,