

DID YOU KNOW...

that medical errors cause more deaths than automobile accidents, cancer and AIDS?



A report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 1999, entitled "To Err is Human," has been the standard of statistics for medical errors for over ten years with many quoting their estimate of 95,000 American deaths per year. The United Kingdom has reported a substantially lower number of 40,000, Canadians are lower still with 24,000 but Australia reports the lowest with just 18,000 per year.

The term "medical error" has become an umbrella expression to cover a multitude of mistakes in the health care system including mishandled surgeries, diagnostic errors, equipment failure and medication errors.

A new study by the IOM in 2006 reported that not all medical errors are fatal but that a sobering 1.5 million people are injured each year. Studies indicate that 400,000 preventable drug-related injuries occur each year in hospitals. In long-term care settings that number is 800,000 and the number is 500,000 among Medicare recipients in outpatient clinics. Of course, they also admitted that these numbers are "likely underestimates".

For more information visit: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/20/AR2006072000754.html