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As much as 45% of all U.S. health care costs due to medical errors, studies show

Medical mistakes account for between 18 and 45 cents of every health care dollar spent in the U.S., and a medical error or adverse effect occurs in one out of every three hospital admissions, researchers say.

According to studies published in the journal *Health Affairs*, the single most expensive cause of harm is infection after surgery, with more than 252,000 infections costing

Patrick A. Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.
1331 H Street N.W.
Suite 902
Washington, DC 20005

pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com
www.patrickmalonelaw.com
202-742-1500
202-742-1515 (fax)

\$3.36 billion reported in 2008, while pressure ulcers (bedsores) are the most common preventable event, with nearly 375,000 cases in 2008 costing \$3.27 billion.

Following a shocking 1999 report that showed that as many as 98,000 people die annually due to medical mistakes, hospitals have tried to reduce such adverse effects, but serious mistakes persist. In 2006, for instance, medical mistakes contributed to as many as 187,135 deaths and 6.1 million injuries that cost between \$393 billion and \$958 billion.

“There are some examples of excellence; we have many [intensive-care units] that have eradicated central line infections. But surrounding those examples of excellence we have serious adverse events going on,” said Dr. Mark Chassin, president of the Joint Commission, a nonprofit organization that accredits health care programs. “Every week in the United States, up to 40 patients undergo a procedure meant for somebody else or the wrong body part,” he said.

The costliest medical errors were:

1. Infections after surgery (252,695 in 2008, cost \$3.36 billion)
2. Pressure ulcers - Bedsores (374,964 in 2008, cost \$3.27 billion)
3. Complications from noncardiac implants and grafts (60,380, cost \$1.07 billion)
4. Complications from lower back surgery (113,823, cost \$1 billion)
5. Excessive bleeding complicating a procedure (78,216, cost \$680 million)

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