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Malpractice and preventable harm still common in hospitals, new study finds

A study of ten hospitals in North Carolina finds a one-in-four chance of being hurt by medical care, a rate that hasn't improved in the ten years since a landmark study said that 100,000 Americans were killed by malpractice and medical error each year.

The new study, published in the nation's leading medical journal, the New England Journal of Medicine, looked at 2,300 randomly chosen admissions in the ten hospitals.

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North Carolina was chosen for the study because it has a high rate of participation in hospital safety efforts.

But the results were discouraging. One in four hospital admissions included harm to the patient due to medical care, and two out of three of those harms were judged to be preventable.

The researchers wrote: "[W]e found that harms remain common, with little evidence of widespread improvement."

What needs to be done? Patient safety experts know that provable techniques to reduce harm to patients haven't penetrated as well as they should into routine hospital practice. Among the techniques identified in this study:

- * Computerized order entry systems, to prevent errors in medications.
- * Hand washing by doctors and nurses to prevent infection spread.
- * Reducing excessive hours by doctors in training and nurses.
- * Mandatory, rather than voluntary, error reporting systems.

You can read the whole [study here](#).

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