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Hospital Malpractice: Saying They're Sorry and Showing They Mean It

Victims of hospital malpractice hunger to be treated with respect as human beings by the hospitals who have destroyed or damaged their lives. A simple "we're sorry" is a good first step, but only a first step. Some forward-looking hospitals are learning that implementing patient safety changes as part of the healing process makes good business sense in addition to helping the patients and their families.

The online magazine, Hospitals and Health Networks, has a good article in its current issue on this. An excerpt:

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When Sandra Coletta took the helm as president and CEO of Kent Hospital in Warwick, R.I., in October 2008, she received a trial-by-fire course in the management of medical error. Two years earlier, in July 2006, a high-profile medical error had occurred in Kent's emergency department when heart monitoring that a doctor ordered for a patient never happened, and the patient died hours after seeking help in the ED. When Coletta began her post at Kent, the legal case was still pending.

"No one from the hospital had talked to the family," Coletta says. "They had only been contacted by lawyers." The hospital had taken a causality defense, its initial position being that the patient's death could not be proven to be a result of its failure to monitor.

For Coletta, it was black and white. The hospital had made an error and was not owning up to it. The family was not getting answers they deserved, and no one was healing, including the caregivers involved in the error.

"There are many pressures from all fronts not to get involved, especially from a legal or public relations perspective," says Coletta. Instead, knowing it would be the only way for everyone involved to begin the healing process, Coletta chose to sit down with the family and do the unthinkable in a medical lawsuit—apologize.

Read more about this different approach to defending [hospital malpractice lawsuits](#) [here](#).

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