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Despite Protocols, Wrong-Site Surgeries Persist

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New research is finding that despite the introduction of the Universal Protocol, operations performed on the wrong person or wrong body part continue to happen at an alarming level.

June 19, 2011 /24-7PressRelease/ -- In an effort to prevent wrong-site and wrong-patient surgeries, the Joint Commission developed the Universal Protocol in 2004. The protocol introduced a series of steps -- preprocedure verification, site marking, and a time out prior to beginning the procedure -- to ensure the correct surgery was being performed on the right person.

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Colorado Study

In a study published in the Archives of Surgery, researchers examined claims submitted to the Colorado Physician Insurance Company's (COPIC) database from January 1, 2002, to June 1, 2008. COPIC provides liability insurance to nearly 6,000 practicing physicians in the state.

Researchers reviewed over 27,000 self-reported adverse occurrences and found that in at least 25 cases, doctors operated on the wrong patient. In an additional 107 cases, surgeons operated on or removed the wrong body part. While no patient died as a result of a wrong-person surgery, one person died from complications due to a wrong-site surgery.

<http://www.lawdoctors.net/Emergency-Room-Malpractice/Surgical-Errors.shtml>

Causes of Medical Mistakes

The study also examined the causes of the mistakes and found that communication errors, happening in 100 percent of the cases, were the main problem in wrong-patient surgeries. Errors in judgment, however, were the main cause in wrong-site surgeries, contributing to the incorrect procedure being performed in 85 percent of the cases. Diagnostic errors and the lack of a "time out," or the process of taking one final step for any person on the surgical team to voice concerns, were also contributing factors in these mistakes.

Article provided by Vincent Morgera

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