

# DOCTOR DEATH

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Physicians say things in attempt to relieve their patients' fears and anxieties
- Medical error is a very big problem
- If medical error was a disease, it would rank as the third leading cause of death in the US
- Medical errors can occur at the individual or system level
- A long held concern in medicine is sleep deprivation and circadian disruption
- Trainees may work more than 80 hours per week and 100 to 120 hour weeks are common
- Fatigue impairs human performance
- Sleep deprived doctors are more likely to make mistakes

“the most frequent lie in a hospital: it won't hurt.”

~ Gerhard Kocher

## THE MOST FREQUENT LIE

Gerhard Kocher, a Swiss health economist, had once stated “the most frequent lie in a hospital: it won't hurt”. Quite often physicians say things in attempt to relieve their patients' fears and anxieties. Should patients be wary of their physicians and modern medical establishments or should patients casually trust their care providers and established medical institutions? In this article, we will briefly examine the risks associated with visiting hospitals and receiving treatments.

## HOSPITALS

Hospitals may be one of the most dangerous institutions on the planet. According to research done by Martin Makary and Michael Daniel, medical error is a very big problem. When we receive care from health care practitioners, we may very well be risking our lives. In an article called *Medical error – the third leading cause of death in the US* published in the BMJ, the article states “If medical error was a disease, it would rank as the third leading cause of death in the US.” This is a startling statement to make considering that we go to doctors, nurses and medical institutions for help. So from where does harm come from? Medical errors can occur at the individual or system level. This means that the direct care provided by health-care professionals, as well as, the policies, practices and procedures put in place in hospitals can put patients at risk. To better understand the reasons why people are harmed, let's examine the findings from the medical research literature.

## THE ACHILLES' HEEL

Physicians, nurses and other medical staff are known to work long hours and varied shifts. A long held concern in medicine is sleep deprivation and circadian disruption. Among medical residents, trainees may work more than 80 hours per week and 100 to 120 hour weeks are common. Medical research has clearly demonstrated that fatigue impairs human performance; thus, sleep deprived doctors are more likely to make mistakes...even fatal mistakes.



- In one prospective analysis from 2005 of 3695 patient episodes within twelve wards over a six month period, researchers discovered that an alarming one in seven hospital in-patients experienced an ADR
- In the year 2000, Health Canada released a report about antiviral drugs Relenza and Tamiflu causing unexpected serious reactions
- *Clostridioides difficile* infection is transmitted from contact with filthy environmental surfaces and contaminated hands of health care personnel
- On average, only 40% of health-care workers comply with hand washing requirements
- Search for health hints in the Bible

## PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS

Pharmaceutical drugs are one of the major items in a doctor's care toolkit. Could these drugs be doing more harm than good? In one prospective analysis from 2005 of 3695 patient episodes within twelve wards over a six month period, researchers discovered that an alarming one in seven hospital in-patients experienced an adverse drug reaction. This means that one in seven patients under physician supervision were harmed by pharmaceutical drugs! Back in the year 2000, Health Canada released a report about antiviral drugs named Relenza and Tamiflu causing unexpected serious reactions. Years later, research continues to be published about the negative health effects associated with using Relenza and Tamiflu; yet, these drugs and others like them continue to be prescribed.

## HOUSEKEEPING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

Medical facilities are supposed to be very clean places to work in. However, the general perception of cleanliness may just be an illusion. In the United States of America, a nationwide survey was completed which included 183 hospitals. Many people who were admitted into these hospitals, approximately one out of every twenty-five, acquired *Clostridioides difficile* infection. This infection is transmitted from contact with filthy environmental surfaces and contaminated hands of health-care personnel. Considering the fact that the hand washing compliance average is approximately 40% among health-care workers, it is safe to say that both hospital staff and the environment they interact with every day might be greatly contaminated with infectious pathogens.

## BACK TO THE BIBLE

Strewn throughout its sacred pages, the Bible has many health hints about how we can stay clean and healthy. When we forsake Bible principles in exchange for the thoughts and opinions of uninspired men, we run into danger. Our safeguard is a firm thus sayeth the Lord. The Bible teaches that there is a cause for every ailment (Proverbs 26:2). Instead of heavily processed pharmaceutical drugs, the Bible teaches us that nature is readily able to furnish us with healing compounds from plants (Ezekiel 47:12, 2 Kings 20:7). Health-care professionals would learn the importance of washing their hands and bodies by studying 2 Kings 5:10,14 in connection with Exodus 30:19 and Numbers 19:19. Both physicians and patients alike would do well if they prayerfully heed these words "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple". (Psalm 119:130)

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