

82 Cases of Medical Lawsuit against Emergency Medicine Specialists; a case study

Masoumeh Pournali, Majid Shojaee, Afshin Amini, Hosein Alimohammadi, Hamidreza Hatamabadi*

Emergency Department, Imam Hossein Hospital, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

*Corresponding author: Hamidreza Hatamabadi; Emergency Department, Imam Hossein Hospital, Shahid Madani Avenue, Imam Hossein Square, Tehran, Iran. Tel: 00989123861683; Email: hhatamabadi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Introduction: Increase of medical errors is a common concern among health care policy planners. Taking into account the importance of identifying the causes of medical errors and preventing them from persisting, this descriptive study reports 82 cases of medical lawsuit against emergency physicians. **Methods:** The present case study, describes 82 cases of medical error by emergency medicine specialists, lawsuit outcome, patient outcome, type of malpractice, total investigation procedure time. Data were self-expressed by the participants and gathered using an anonymous questionnaire. **Results:** Data on 82 lawsuits against emergency physicians were gathered. Mean age of the emergency physicians was 37.3 ± 5.7 years (89.2% male). Finally, in 53 (63.8%) cases malpractice was confirmed. Frequency of medical errors was significantly higher in night shifts compared to evening ($p = 0.02$) and morning ($p = 0.01$). Human error was the most frequent cause of malpractice with 27 (50.9%) cases ($p < 0.001$). Among human errors, diagnostic (48.2%) and treatment (33.3%) errors were the most important causes. Medical errors led to death in 28 (52.8%) cases and severe harm in 6 (11.3%) of the patients ($p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Frequency of medical errors was calculated to be 63.85% in this study. Most human errors occurred in the night shifts. The major human error was malpractice with 50.9% prevalence. Among human errors, diagnostic and treatment errors were the most frequent. These errors finally led to 52.8% death and 11.3% severe harm among the patients.

Key words: Malpractice; medical errors; emergency service, hospital; physicians