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## Med errors among top 10 killers

Malathy Iyer TNN

Mumbai: Medicine heals, but this fact doesn't hold true for every 300th patient admitted to hospital. Call it the law of averages or blame human error for it, but the World Health Organization believes that one in 10 hospital admissions leads to an adverse event and one in 300 admissions in death.

An adverse event could range from the patient having to spend an extra day in hospital or missing a dose of medicine, said Dr Nikhil Datar, a gynaecologist and health activist. Unintended medical errors are a big threat to patient safety.

Although there is no Indian data available on this topic, WHO lists it among the top 10 killers in the world. While a British National Health System survey in 2009 reported that 15% of its patients were misdiagnosed, an American study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2000 quantified this problem most effectively. It said that there are 2,000 deaths every year from unnecessary surgery; 7,000 deaths from medication errors in hospitals; 20,000 from other errors in hospitals; 80,000 from infections in hospitals; and 106,000 deaths every year from non-error, adverse effects of medications. In all, 225,000 deaths occur per year in the US due to unintentional medical errors.

It is to create awareness both among doctors and patients about errors dubbed as unintended medical errors that Datar has organized a seminar to discuss patient safety at the Indian Medical Association's office in Juhu on Sunday. In the western nations, it is believed that the incidence of unintentional medical errors is between 10% and 17% of all cases, said Datar.

The Indian government has woken up to the concept. It set up the National Initiative on Patient Safety in the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences a couple of years back, and the Maharashtra government is a party to Sunday's conference.



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