Open School

Video Activity: Apologizing Effectively to Patients and Families

(http://www.ihi.org/education/IHIOpenSchool/resources/Pages/Activities/ApologizingEffectivelytoPatientsandFamilies.aspx)

Lucian Leape, MD, Adjunct Professor of Health Policy at the Harvard School of Public Health

Facilitator Instructions

- Review the learning objectives and description with your group.
- Watch the video together (6 min 35 sec).
- As a group, discuss your reactions to the video, using the discussion questions as a guide.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this activity, you will be able to:

- Discuss the importance of communicating with patients after a medical error.
- Recall the main points a health care professional should include when apologizing to a patient after an error.
- Identify at least two major barriers to disclosing medical errors in a health care setting.

Description

When you make a mistake that affects a patient, what should you say? Should you apologize, or will that put you at greater risk of being sued? Lucian Leape, MD, Adjunct Professor of Health Policy at the Harvard School of Public Health, describes how to talk with patients and families after a mistake has occurred.

Related IHI Open School Online Courses

- PS 105: Communicating with Patients after Adverse Events
- PS 106: Introduction to the Culture of Safety
- PS 103: Teamwork and Communication
Key Topics

Engage patients and families in care, patient- and family-centered care, transparency, adverse event, patient safety, satisfaction: patient and family

**Facilitator**, show the video on this page. For your group’s discussion after the video, feel free to adjust these questions and/or add your own.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Lucian Leape says that if you make a mistake, you should admit it, explain what happened, and why. He also thinks you should apologize to the patient and follow up. Do you agree with his formula for disclosure? If not, what parts of it should be different?

2. Imagine you’re a patient and a health care provider makes a mistake in your care. What’s the single most important thing the provider and/or organization can do to make you feel they responded appropriately? Why do you think that’s the most important step?

3. Lucian Leape talks about the importance of supporting physicians through the error disclosure process. If you’ve been in an environment where a mistake occurred, do you think the provider got enough support? If not, how could the support have been better?