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Medical errors: Causes and its impact on postgraduate residents

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Background: Medical errors are inevitable and can have a disastrous effect on patient, treating doctors and institute as well.

Objective: To determine the causes of medical errors, the emotional and behavioral response of pediatric medicine residents to their medical errors and to determine their behavior change affecting their future training.

Methodology: 130 postgraduate residents working at the Children's Hospital Lahore were included (response rate 87%). Residents were asked to complete questionnaire about their errors and responses to their errors in three domains: emotional response, learning behavior and disclosure of the error.

Results: Majority 128(98.5%) of these described some form of error. Serious errors that occurred were 24(19%), 63(48%) minor, 24(19%) near misses and 2(2%) never encountered an error. Only 73(57%) residents disclosed medical errors to their senior physician but disclosure to

patient's family was 15(11%). Negative emotions were common: Eighty-five (66%) felt emotional distress and sorrow 89(70%). Negative emotions were significantly associated with lack of knowledge ($p=0.001$), missing warning signs ($p<0.001$), not seeking advice ($p=0.003$) and procedural complications ($p=0.001$). Medical errors had significant impact on resident's behavior; 119(93%) residents became more careful, increased advice seeking from seniors 109(86%) and 109(86%) started paying more attention to details. Intrinsic causes of errors were significantly associated with increased information seeking behavior and vigilance ($p=0.003$) and ($p=0.01$) respectively.

Conclusion: Medical errors committed by residents have inadequate disclosure to senior physicians and result in negative emotions but there was positive change in their behavior, which resulted in improvement in their future training and patient care.

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