

Talking to Patients About Health Care Injury

Statement of Principle

When a health care injury occurs, the patient and the family or representative are entitled to a prompt explanation of how the injury occurred and its short- and long-term effects. When an error contributed to the injury, the patient and the family or representative should receive a truthful and compassionate explanation about the error and the remedies available to the patient. They should be informed that the factors involved in the injury will be investigated so that steps can be taken to reduce the likelihood of similar injury to other patients.

Health care professionals and institutions that accept this responsibility are acknowledging their ethical obligation to be forthcoming about health care injuries and errors.

The National Patient Safety Foundation urges all health care professionals and institutions to embrace the principle of dealing honestly with patients.