

Risk Management

SNAPSHOT

Current issues and trends in healthcare risk management for practice managers.

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One-third of malpractice claims are caused by diagnostic error.

An article in HealthLeaders reports on a study published in the journal *Diagnosis*. The study reviewed data from CRICO's Comparative Database and found that a third of high-severity claims resulted from diagnostic error.

Most serious misdiagnosis harm was related to the "big three" conditions — vascular events, infections, and cancer. The [study calls for more work](#) in identifying causes of diagnostic error.

For full details of the study, access the [Diagnosis journal](#).

Test tracking and appointment management is essential to assuring your patients receive the appropriate care and follow up. Your Medical Mutual risk manager can survey your practice's appointment and results management processes. Contact your MMIC risk manager today to find out how we can help you improve your processes.

Medical Mutual's practice tips [Appointments: Referral Not Completed, Missed \(No Show\) & Canceled Appointments](#) and [Diagnostic Test Tracking Systems](#) can assist your practice in providing safe and effective care.

Could your patient's symptoms be linked to e-cigarette use?

As of October 2019, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) received over 1,300 reports of lung injury associated with e-cigarettes or vaping. The CDC recommends that when a patient presents with respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, providers should inquire about e-cigarette use.

The CDC recently released [interim guidelines](#) providers can use to evaluate and treat patients with lung injuries related to e-cigarettes or vaping products. The CDC's interim guidelines recommend close follow-up as some patient's conditions deteriorated within 48 hours of presenting with mild symptoms.

Medical Mutual's practice tip [Appointments: Referral Not Completed, Missed \(No Show\) & Canceled Appointments](#) outlines the importance of assuring that your patients return for follow up visits.

You received notice of a lawsuit, now what?

A physician's first reaction to a lawsuit might be anger or sadness; however, the first steps they take can often make a difference in the outcome of the case. An article in Family Practice News provides physicians with steps to follow and things to avoid when faced with a malpractice suit.

The most important first step is to notify your malpractice insurance carrier. Employed physicians should contact their healthcare system's risk manager right away.

A physician might reason that they have a good relationship with their patient and should just contact them to work things out. The article cautions against this. While this might seem harmless, "plaintiff's attorneys can and will take whatever you say and use it out of context against you."

Do not attempt to alter or change the patient's medical record. An altered record almost always guarantees settlement even in a medically defensible case. To access the [full article](#) you can create a free account through MD-edge.

As outlined in the article, if one of your physician's receives notice of a lawsuit, they should either contact Medical Mutual directly or if an employed physician they should contact their healthcare system risk manager. For more information visit Medical Mutual's [Claims Management webpage](#).

Good documentation is your best defense in a malpractice suit. Medical Mutual's practice tip [Medical Records: Documentation of Patient Care in the Legal Health Record: From a Risk Management Perspective](#) outlines important aspects of the legal health record.

Top 10 Technology Hazards for 2020

A special report from the ECRI Institute identifies the top 10 Health Technology Hazards for 2020. Are you aware of the potential risks involved in medical devices and systems? Do you have processes in place to address these risks?

Increasing technologies in the outpatient setting can mean increased patient safety risks. Practices should have processes in place to identify and mitigate risks associated with medical devices and systems. For the full list of technology hazards read the [ECRI Executive Brief](#).

What are the top reported sentinel events in the ambulatory setting?

Hospitals accredited by the Joint Commission (TJC) are strongly encouraged to report their sentinel events. TJC analyzes these events in order to help organizations identify and reduce patient safety risks. Events reported from ambulatory settings are similar to hospital reported events.

As in the hospital setting, [wrong site events and unintentional foreign object retention](#) were the most frequently reported events.

Medical Mutual's practice tip [Surgery - Office-Based Procedures](#) provides your practice with helpful information to consider when performing office-based procedures.