

IQ -- Interesting Quotes

Editorial Staff

Medical Casualties

The number of iatrogenic casualties in the U.S. each year has been estimated between 150,000 and 200,000.¹ An editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Association places the figure at 180,000 deaths per year.² In his book *Deadly Medicine*, investigative reporter Thomas Moore states that "medical mistakes in United States hospitals kill 168,000 persons each year."¹

Author Moore explains the ramifications of medical negligence:

"The Harvard study concluded that 51 percent of the deaths from adverse events occurred through medical negligence, and therefore could have been prevented. Thus, preventable deaths from medical negligence in hospitals total 86,000 a year, easily outnumbering annual deaths from auto accidents (48,000) and murder (26,000). Among hospital deaths from medical mistakes, adverse reactions to prescription drugs were the most common cause."

What percentage of the American public is aware of these figures? If this information was common knowledge, it would certainly influence health care decisions in this country.

References

1. Moore T. *Deadly Medicine*. Simon & Schuster, 1995.
2. Leape LL. Error in medicine. *JAMA* 1994;272:1851-1857.

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