

Physicians must be proactive in risk management

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(HealthDay)—Risk is inherent in the practice of medicine, but physicians can take steps to prevent patient injury and avoid lawsuits, according to an article published Dec. 10 in *Medical Economics*.

A sizable percent of all claims involve missed or delayed diagnosis. Poor patient outcomes can result from failures in [clinical judgment](#), technical skills, communication, system failures, and documentation.

Physicians can protect their practices by recognizing what poses the greatest risk to their practice and creating and implementing formal policies and procedures. Six common risks that can be mitigated include: (1) faulty communication; (2) lack of [informed consent](#); (3) not being current on practice standards and training; (4) inadequate follow-up on

diagnostic tests or referrals; (5) lack of consistent in-practice rules and policies; and (6) avoiding relatives and patients in light of a bad outcome.

"Risk management is a series of strategies designed to reduce the likelihood of injury to the patient, and when [injury](#) occurs, to reduce the likelihood that a suit results," said Richard G. Roberts, M.D., J.D., the past president of the American Academy of Family Physicians, according to the *Medical Economics* article.

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