Five strategies can reduce risk of medical lawsuits

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(HealthDay)—Five strategies can be employed by physicians in order to

help reduce the risk of lawsuits, according to an article published in *Medical Economics*.

Noting that a recent survey suggests the lifetime risk of a primary care physician getting sued is 75 percent, the authors present five strategies that can be implemented in order to reduce the risk of lawsuits and improve the odds of a favorable outcome if physicians are sued.

According to the article, doctors should be aware that they need to document everything; if something is not in the chart, the doctor will be deemed not to have done it for the purpose of malpractice litigation. This should include documenting all conversations, as well as noting every action in the patient's chart. Physicians should be transparent with patients; for example, sharing their notes with patients and taking time to explain what the notes mean. Showing empathy is important, and research shows that apologies tend to reduce the probability of getting sued. Adoption of electronic health records adds potential liability for primary care physicians; for example, careless use of shortcuts such as copy and paste and turning off computer-generated warnings. Finally, physicians should maintain objectivity and strive for good relationships with their patients.

"Good communication and strong relationships are goals physicians and staff members can and should work toward," according to the article.

More information: Full Text

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