

Bad Handwriting By Doctors May Contribute To 7,000 Deaths a Year

Prescription errors are responsible for the deaths of an estimated 7,000 Americans annually, and many of those errors are a result of bad handwriting, says this MSNBC article.

Some hospitals are taking the issue so seriously that they're sending doctors back to school to learn how to write legibly. Others are experimenting with computerized systems that require doctors to input the information about prescribed drugs, and the computer double-checks the dosage.

The case that brought this issue to the forefront involved the death of a 42-year-old Texas man. His cardiologist wrote him a prescription for the heart medication Isordil. But the pharmacist filled the prescription with the high blood pressure medication Plendil, reports this article on the American Medical Association's web site amednews.com. The man had a heart attack and died after taking the wrong medication for a day. The jury found the physician and the pharmacist equally responsible for the death.