

Medical errors kill tens of thousands annually, panel says

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- More people die each year in the United States from medical errors than from highway accidents, breast cancer or AIDS, a federal advisory panel reported Monday.

The report from the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine cited studies showing between 44,000 and 98,000 people die each year because of mistakes by medical professionals.

"That's probably an underestimate for two reasons," noted Dr. Donald Berwick of the Institute of Medicine.

"One is, there are many different kinds of errors we never learn about -- even in retrospective studies -- because they are never written down. And second, these studies did not include other areas of care like home care, nursing homes and ambulatory care centers," Berwick said.



Anesthesiologists made their field safer by getting manufacturers to standardize equipment

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Report: Deaths from medication errors on increase

(CNN) -- Deaths caused by medication mistakes more than doubled between 1983 and 1993, according to findings published in the British medical journal The Lancet on Saturday.

The study by a research team at the University of California at San Diego found that the sharpest increase in deaths was among outpatients.

Deaths from accidental poisoning by drugs and other medicines climbed from 851 to nearly 2,100. Of those, outpatient deaths increased from under 200 to just under 1,500. By 1993, outpatients were 6.5 times more likely to die from medication mistakes than inpatients.

The report was based on death certificates, and it was unclear whether the deaths were caused by a medical professional's error or patient error.

