

Medical mistakes often unreported

About 3,500 patients die — and no one has to know

By Sarah A. Webster / *The Detroit News*

Twenty states require hospitals to report serious mistakes, but Michigan isn't among them.

As a result, it's impossible to say exactly how many people are maimed or killed by hospital foul-ups. But based on a recent report by the Institute of Medicine, which estimates 36 error-related hospital deaths per 100,000 people, 3,534 Michiganians died last year due to medical mistakes.

Patients reported 2,027 complaints about health care organizations to the state, but Tom Lindsay, director of the Michigan Bureau of Health Services, said those likely represent just a fraction of the mistakes.

"I can't tell you how many deaths or injuries result from medical mistakes," Lindsay said.

Several institute members said mandatory reporting of serious mistakes is the first step to reducing the errors. It is asking Congress to establish a nationwide mandatory reporting system for medical errors that cause injury or death.



Morris Richardson II/ *The Detroit News*
Colleen Chapman of Dearborn was overcome with emotion in a Wayne County court in December. She is suing a local hospital to learn what diseases she may have been exposed to because of a mistake in sterilizing an instrument used on her during surgery.