

# Study slams medical error rate in nation

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A panel of the National Academy of Sciences, in a highly critical report, yesterday called for a major national effort to reduce medical errors by developing a mandatory reporting system and asking Congress to establish a center to study them.

The 220-page report, written by a 19-member committee of the Academy's Institute of Medicine, set as a goal a 50 percent reduction in the nation's "stunningly high rate of medical errors" within five years. It estimated that errors from medical treatment kill up to 98,000 people in U.S. hospitals every year and characterized the problem as among the nation's leading causes of death and injury.

Several members of the committee said in interviews yesterday that the report was intended as a loud call to action for the health-care industry, which it said has not acted swiftly enough to address the causes of errors.

"What it says is 'enough already,' " said Lucian Leape, a committee member and adjunct professor of health policy at the Harvard School of Public Health. "It's a matter of holding people's feet to the fire and stop talking about errors and start doing something."