

Surgeons Still Make Preventable Mistakes

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There are certain mistakes that should never happen to you during surgery. The surgeon should never accidentally leave a sponge in your body after he sews you up, perform surgery on the wrong part of your body, or perform the entirely wrong surgery on you.

These mistakes are known as “never events” because the medical community has agreed there is no legitimate reason for their ever happening. But new research finds that they still do occur at unacceptable rates, costing the healthcare system millions of dollars each year.

Using the National Practitioner Data Bank, an electronic warehouse of medical malpractice claims, researchers at John Hopkins University estimated the number of times that “never events” occurred within the past 20 years. They found that there were close to 10,000 reported instances when a foreign object was left in a patient, the wrong surgery was performed, or the surgery was performed on the wrong patient or wrong part of the body. These surgeries cost the healthcare industry an estimated \$1.3 billion in malpractice payments over that same time period.

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