



That's Value Protection.



Hello Visitor Register Sign-In

LAT Home | My LATimes | Print Edition | All Sections

Jobs | Cars.com | Real Estate | More Classifieds

Los Angeles Times | California | Local

Crime | Education | Politics | Environment | Immigration | Traffic | O.C. | Valley | Inland Empire

You are here: LAT Home > California | Local



California/Local

Columnists:

- » Steve Lopez
- » Sandy Banks
- » Patt Morrison
- » George Skelton
- » Dana Parsons
- » Steve Harvey
- » Steve Hymon

Community Papers:

- » Burbank
- » Newport Beach
- » Laguna Beach
- » Huntington Beach
- » Glendale

News

- California | Local
- National
- World
- Entertainment
- Business
- Sports
- Campaign '08
- Science
- Environment
- Opinion
- Columnists
- Print Edition
- Readers' Rep
- Corrections

The Guide ^{NEW}
The Envelope
Travel

Magazine
Home & Garden

- Health
- Food
- Autos
- Books
- Image
- Arts & Culture
- Living Green
- Video

- Photography
- Obituaries
- Crossword, Sudoku
- Your Scene
- Blogs
- All Sections

Buy, Sell & More

- Jobs
- Cars
- Real Estate

Serious patient errors at California hospitals disclosed in state filings

About 100 Californians a month are being harmed in adverse events considered preventable. A lawmaker proposes banning reimbursements to hospitals for some types of injuries.

By Jordan Rau, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
June 30, 2008

» Discuss Article SACRAMENTO -- Last October, a technician at the children's hospital at Stanford University improperly connected a ventilator hose, accidentally pumping too little oxygen into a 9-day-old infant's lungs.

A month later, technicians at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz unintentionally placed a CT scan of one patient into the electronic file of another, leading physicians to remove the wrong person's appendix.



After livers, cash to UCLA

- » Hospital errors
- » Celebrity-snooping ex-UCLA Medical Center staffer is indicted
- » UC willing to discuss operating King-Harbor hospital

Last March, Virginia Fahres, 76, died at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center in Pomona after a nurse gave her two drugs, neither of which her doctor had prescribed.

Those incidents were among 1,002 cases of serious medical harm

disclosed by California hospitals between July 2007 and May of this year. The disclosures are the first under a state law that requires hospitals to inform health regulators of all substantial injuries to their patients.

Officially called "adverse events," those accidents are also known as "never events" because they are considered preventable, and many safety experts say they should never happen. California patients are being injured at a rate of about 100 a month, according to data compiled by the state Department of Public Health.

"I think the never events are a wake-up call to everyone about the safety of California hospitals," said Beth Capell, a lobbyist for Health Access California, a consumer group.

Revelations of such errors have led lawmakers and hospital associations in at least seven states to protect patients from having to pay for the cost of care that went awry. In Sacramento, an assemblyman proposed a ban on reimbursing hospitals for the types of injuries tracked by the state. But when lobbyists for doctors and hospitals objected, he scaled it back to cover far fewer errors.

Four million people were admitted to California hospitals last year. State investigators found some errors occurred because hospitals failed to follow safeguards designed specifically to prevent harm.

Last July at UC San Diego Medical Center, a patient died after a nurse incorrectly programmed a medicine pump that then delivered more than twice the appropriate dose of a specialized blood pressure drug. Regulators found that the hospital's administration had been warned earlier by its own safety committee that "errors continue to occur" with that type of pump but had not taken sufficient corrective action, according to a state probe.

UC San Diego officials said they have since held repeat drills with staffers who treat patients with Flolan and examined every step in the process.

Dr. Angela Scioscia, the center's senior medical director, said the public reporting requirement is "a great opportunity to make rapid improvements" because hospitals

Email | Print | Text | Single Page | RSS

ADVERTISEMENT

NEWS APPLIANCES VIDEO

FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING WITH ENERGY-EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

Click an appliance to learn more!

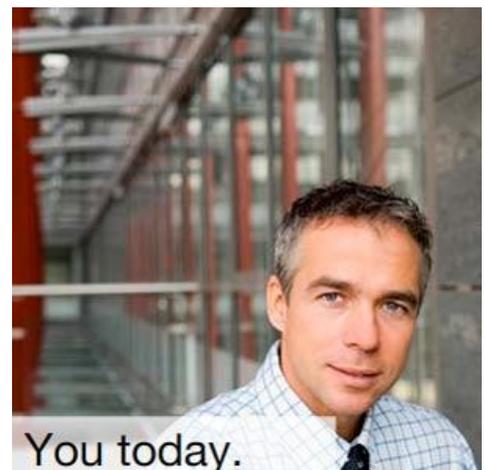
Rebates are available in Rancho Santa Margarita!

FIND REBATES

Flex YOUR POWER.ORG

Most Viewed | Most E-mailed

1. Elton Brand agrees to go to the 76ers; Corey Maggette has deal with the Warriors
2. Obama shows signs of trail-weariness
3. It will cost more to watch Lakers
4. Donald Sterling can't be blamed for Elton Brand's departure
5. Saga of Omar Sharif and the valet he struck winds toward a conclusion
6. Motorist dies in crash on the 210
7. Forced servitude in America?
8. Cheney's office tried to alter greenhouse gas testimony, former official says
9. Undocumented students have a degree of anxiety
10. Fire destroys 40 homes in Northern California



You today.

- [Apartments](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Deals at Local Stores](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Newspaper Ads](#)

Place an Ad

[In the Newspaper Online](#)

Settings & Services

- [Sign In](#)
- [Register](#)
- [Personalized News](#)
- [E-Mail Newsletters](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [L.A. Times Archives](#)
- [Reprint Requests](#)
- [Work for Us](#)

Home Delivery

[Customer Support](#)
[Subscribe](#)

50% off news & fun

can learn from one another's problems. "We don't want people to be afraid when they come into hospitals, because they are becoming safer and safer all the time," Scioscia said.

Under the [2006 disclosure law](#) by state Sen. Elaine Alquist (D-Santa Clara), hospitals must inform state regulators of every occurrence of 28 different types of dangerous mistakes. Those include deaths during labor, medication errors, suicide attempts and sexual assaults.

The public health department has until 2015 to begin posting the information on the Internet, although officials said they hope to begin publishing it earlier. The most recent figures available cover the 10 months since July 2007. In that time, 466 patients developed bedsores so severe that the dead skin formed a crater or rotted through to the muscle or bone.

Another 145 patients had foreign objects such as surgical equipment left in their bodies. Thirty-four died while under anesthesia. In 41 surgeries, doctors performed the wrong procedure or operated on the wrong body part or on the wrong patient.

So far, the state [Department of Public Health](#) has levied \$25,000 fines against 10 hospitals that reported adverse events. Officials said other investigations are still under way.

One hospital, Scripps Memorial in La Jolla, was fined twice for two errors that occurred last November with the same patient. First, as the patient was recovering from surgery, she was [given a painkiller](#) that is not supposed to be used after operations. When she went into respiratory arrest, the pharmacist [provided a corrective medication](#) at a dose 10 times too weak to be effective.

The patient survived. State investigators discovered that the hospital's pharmacists had not been properly instructed in the use of 10 medications, including the corrective drug, that the hospital stocked for emergencies.

The [ventilator error](#) at Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital occurred because a therapist had assembled the machine by following a diagram that had been drawn backward. Dr. Christy Sandborg, the hospital's chief of staff, said the medical team quickly noticed that the ventilator wasn't working correctly and stopped using it. The child recovered, she said, and the hospital has made changes to prevent future occurrences.

Overcrowded emergency rooms are another factor behind patient injuries. A 2006 [study](#) found that California had fewer emergency rooms per resident than any other state.

At Kaiser Foundation Hospital San Jose in March, staffers left a patient waiting in the emergency room for more than an hour after a test showed that his blood sugar was higher than the maximum measurable with a glucometer. The medics determined that he needed immediate care, but all 25 treatment bays were full. He passed out in the waiting room and [died from heart failure](#).

Post Comment

Discussion

Name

Enter your comments and post to forum

▲
▼

Share your thoughts on this story.

[Read all 0 comments](#)

By participating you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and represent that you are not under the age of 13.

You tomorrow.

We Know You.

UNIVERSITY OF
Redlands
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

888.999.9844
www.redlands.edu

Sports Headlines

1. [Kobe Bryant's time has arrived](#)
2. [Doping case against Tour de France winner Landis is upheld](#)
3. [Angels avoid being swept by Dodgers](#)
4. [Track's future rests on sprinters' tests](#)
5. [Anita Ortega's drive at UCLA pays off for LAPD](#)

Lotus flowers in peril



It's likely that there will be no lotus at all for the first time in the 31-year history of Echo Park's annual Lotus Festival.

Your Scene: Reader Photos

View our readers' photos of Weird Warnings and share your own at Your Scene.

[Submit your photo »](#)





Hollywood's unwedded bliss list

Who knows the secret to longstanding relationships in Hollywood, but for these couples, it's definitely *not* tying the knot.



Could oil hit \$200 a barrel?

As forecasters take that possibility more seriously, they envision shifts in the way we work, where we live and how we spend our free time.

[Discuss](#)



Save over 50% off the newsstand price. [Click here to subscribe to The Times.](#)

More on LATimes.com

[Los Angeles](#) | [Orange County](#) | [San Fernando Valley](#) | [Ventura County](#) | [Inland Empire](#)

Partners

[Hoy](#) | [KTLA](#) | [Metromix](#) | [ShopLocal](#) | [Shopping](#)
[Grocery Coupons](#)

Classifieds

[Career Builder](#) | [Cars.com](#) | [Apartments.com](#)
[FSBO \(For Sale By Owner\)](#) | [Open Houses](#)

Los Angeles Times

Copyright 2008 Los Angeles Times | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Home Delivery](#) | [Reprint Requests](#) | [Help & Services](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#)