

University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers

**(Step 2) Taking potential benefits and harms into account:
Patient-Centered Interests**

“How might the patient be affected?”	
Potential benefits of disclosure (Why to disclose)	Potential harms of disclosure (Why not to disclose)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Timely/appropriate treatment to correct injury could be obtained, thereby avoiding further harm ◆ Patients are provided with relevant information needed to make informed decisions ◆ There may be a greater willingness to obtain necessary treatment if the reason is known ◆ Informed consent for follow-up treatment is facilitated, reducing the risk for further harm ◆ Patients have opportunity to seek care from someone else ◆ Patients will not needlessly worry about the source of new, unforeseen medical problems ◆ Patients will have more realistic expectations about medical interventions ◆ Patients may take greater responsibility for their care ◆ Patients/families may obtain just compensation for injury ◆ Disclosure promotes trust in the practitioner and the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Knowledge of the error may cause alarm, anxiety and discouragement ◆ Patients may avoid needed follow-up treatment for fear of further error or harm ◆ Trust in the practitioner's abilities may be damaged ◆ Trust in the healthcare system may be damaged and future medical care might not be sought ◆ Disclosure may be unwelcome as some patients may not wish to have this knowledge ◆ Knowing the error may have been avoidable could cause even greater suffering ◆ Immense and irreversible harm may occur with certain patients whose sense of autonomy is undermined

Based in part on the work of:

- (1) Wu A. et al. “To Tell the Truth: Ethical and Practical Issues in Disclosing Medical Mistakes to Patients.” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 12.12(December 1997):770-775.
- (2) Rosner F. et al. “Disclosure and Prevention of Medical Errors.” *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 160(2000):2089-2092.

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