

University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers

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

| “How might the practitioner be affected?” | |
|---|---|
| Potential benefits of disclosure (Why to disclose) | Potential harms of disclosure (Why not to disclose) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Disclosure preserves personal integrity ◆ Disclosure can encourage learning from one's errors ◆ Accepting responsibility for the error may facilitate constructive changes in clinical practice ◆ Disclosure negates legal grounds for fraudulent concealment ◆ Emotional distress may be alleviated after admitting error, especially if forgiveness is received from the patient/family ◆ Disclosure may decrease the risks of litigation ◆ The practitioner-patient relationship may be reinforced as patients may express appreciation for such honesty ◆ Sharing such experiences can broaden collective learning and prevent similar errors from occurring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Disclosure may cause discomfort and anxiety ◆ The patient/family may respond with anger ◆ The act of disclosing may be difficult, particularly if no forgiveness is offered by the patient/family ◆ The patient/family may lose confidence in the practitioner’s abilities ◆ There might be a perceived or real loss of reputation and respect among peers and patients/families ◆ Health care services may be sought from another practitioner ◆ Disclosure may bring about malpractice litigation ◆ The practitioner's financial well being may be threatened through higher malpractice insurance premiums and through potential loss of referrals, credentialing, privileging, licensing, etc... |

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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