**Ethical and Legal Concerns of Disclosing Adverse Events**

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**Objectives:** Upon completion of this presentation, participants will be able to identify key components of a successful disclosure program and understand the value of transparency to improve patient safety.

**Summary:** Efforts to prevent adverse patient outcomes of care must be supplemented by increased honesty and openness with patients and their families about a medical error. The barriers to disclosure are a human tendency to avoid conflict, inability to pierce an existing denial, and the fear of lawsuits. In addition, the root causes of medical malpractice claims are deeper and closer to home than many in the medical community care to admit. The University of Michigan Health System’s experience suggests that a response by the medical community more directly aimed at what drives patients to call lawyers would more effectively reduce claims, without compromising meritorious defenses. More importantly, honest assessments of medical care give rise to clinical improvements that reduce patient injuries.

**Key Points:**
1. Disclosure begins with informed consent and is a process, not a single event.
2. Managing patient expectations minimizes the likelihood of a patient turning to a lawyer for answers.
3. Increased efforts toward patient safety are the most important methods to reduce adverse outcomes and claims.

**Key References:**