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Avoiding Errors

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Measures taken in the course of healthcare assistance can, in certain cases, cause harm to patients, even if originally the aim was to help.

A European study revealed that nearly four European citizens out of five (78%) considered medical errors in their country as a serious problem.

Reacting to errors on the basis of a reporting system or by an increase in information technology represents an opportunity for systematic improvement.

For this reason and others, massive investment is taking place in the development of information systems in different countries. The article of Lorin M. Hitt and Nick Beard shows that this is also the case in the United States and explains the benefits that have already been reaped there.

One approach using commercially available solutions involves the use of electronic patient records. But what does the integration of the files in a hospital information system require? Steffan Hayna et al. planned and funded a projection for this purpose, and Dr. Ignazio Cassis et al. similarly describe the introduction of electronic health cards in the canton of Tessin, in Switzerland.

Other options include the communication of requests, results and services, including electronic prescriptions and the delivery of medicines. Hospital information systems that include the integration of tools for controlling work procedures reduce the incidence of errors. The systems offer coordinated and flexible automisation of numerous manual processes susceptible to errors that occur in the highly specialised and fragmented sector of healthcare.

It is also necessary to create standards and integrate them, as shown by A. Brüggeman (Austria) in his article. Even in aftercare of hospital patients, processes can be optimised, using an prize-winning IT system developed internally as Dr. Holger Pschichholz of the University of Freiburg describes.

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