

# **The Apology in Emergency Medicine**

*by*

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## ***Abstract***

In the wake of medical errors and potential lawsuits, apologies made by the doctor to the patient have the ability to decrease the spur of litigation and restore the relationship of trust and confidence between them. Often, when things go wrong in a medical treatment, the patient wants to know what actually happened, why it happened and be assured that it will not happen again in the future. At this juncture, apologies which are ‘statements acknowledging error and its consequences, including accepting responsibilities and communication of regrets’ can reduce the intensifying anger and desires to retaliate. Nevertheless, apologies may also have the potential to be seen as admissions of guilt by the doctor and may at certain circumstances expose the doctor to risks of impending lawsuits. In weighing the drawbacks of apologies against their benefits, several countries have enacted ‘apology laws’ that mandate open disclosure of medical errors and at the same time, shielding those who apologise from legal liability.

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