

# PATIENT SAFETY AND THE SURGEON PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

## PATIENT SAFETY AND THE SURGEON: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Among medical specialties, surgery is one of the most invasive healthcare interventions that a patient can experience. More than 100 million people worldwide undergo surgical treatment every year. Problems associated with surgical safety in resource-rich countries account for half of the avoidable adverse events that result in death or disability. The 'more than one cause' theory of accident causation can be aptly applied to many aspects of surgical patient care during the perioperative period. However, irrespective of the Sir Alfred Cuschieri, b.1938, Maltese surgeon and Emeritus Professor of Surgery, Dundee, UK. - Patient safety at the coal face - safety event or issue, the surgeon as the likely senior team leader will play a key role in reporting and communicating these events with patients and carers, other team members and hospital administration. This is particularly so for those coal-face errors where patients identify the surgeon as being responsible for a defined episode of care. Cuschieri and others have described coal-face errors as those that can potentially be committed by surgeons during the care of their patients and include: diagnostic and management errors; resuscitation errors; prophylaxis errors; prescription/parenteral administration errors; situation awareness, identification and teamwork errors; technical and operative errors.

Communicating well with patients and their carers  
Understanding situational awareness and emotional intelligence  
Effective teamworking  
Professionalism, as another essential component of patient safety  
System approach to clinical risk management events and patients' complaints

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