

Putting the Brakes on Medical Errors

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Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), James Jeffords (R-VT), William Frist (R-TN), and Christopher Dodd (D-CT) are continuing to draft legislation that will curb medical errors and, at press time, was expected to be presented in June. Insiders indicated that the bill will likely focus on expanding the role of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality or adding a new federal office for patient safety. Mandatory reporting will likely be avoided. There had been talk among members of including medical error language in the current patients' rights legislation; however, it appears that such language will be included only if the measure is extremely noncontroversial.

On a related note, a recent survey issued by the National Academy for State Health Policy reported that 15 states require that general and acute care hospitals urge voluntary reporting of medical errors or adverse events. Six states have legislation pending mandating medical error reporting. To obtain a copy of the report, call (207) 874-6524 or send e-mail to info@nashp.org.

Source: *Journal of AHIMA* 71:7 (July-August 2000)

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