

# Why patients don't report medical errors

Mass Device

by [Marshall Allen](#) [1], ProPublica

I was recently browsing through the nearly 200 stories we've compiled with our [Patient Harm Questionnaire](#) [2], when I was reminded again of a troubling truth. Many of the people who suffer harm while undergoing medical care do not file formal complaints with regulators. The reasons are numerous: They're often traumatized, disabled, unaware they've been a victim of a medical error or don't understand the bureaucracy.

That's a problem for those individual patients and for the rest of us. There are many places to complain: a [state licensing agency](#) [3]; a professional licensing board that monitors [doctors](#) [4] or [nurses](#) [5]; the [Joint Commission](#) [6], which accredits hospitals or a Medicare [Quality Improvement Organization](#) [7].

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### Links:

[1] [http://www.propublica.org/site/author/marshall\\_allen/](http://www.propublica.org/site/author/marshall_allen/)

[2] <http://www.propublica.org/article/patient-harm-questionnaire>

[3] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>

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[5] [http://www.ceu.org/state\\_nurses\\_assn.html](http://www.ceu.org/state_nurses_assn.html)

[6] <http://www.jointcommission.org/>

[7] <http://www.qualitynet.org/dcs/ContentServer?c=Page&pagename=QnetPublic/Page/QnetTier2&cid=1144767874793>