

# Unexpected Medical Outcomes: Information for Patients

Even though doctors, nurses, and health care facilities work hard to give patients the best care possible, patients can occasionally be injured during medical treatment. Sometimes an injury is a result of an error: something that a health care facility, nurse, or doctor did (or did not do). However, it is important to remember that most treatment involves the risk of complications since medicine is not an exact science. Even when good quality medical care is provided, injury can occur. When a medical outcome is not what you've expected, no matter the reason, we will ensure that you are supported both medically and emotionally.

\_\_\_\_\_(name of facility)\_\_\_\_\_ uses the Communication, Apology, and Resolution (CARE) program, as a framework to resolve unexpected outcomes with patients.

## The Communication, Apology, and Resolution (CARE) Program aims to:

- 1. *Improve communication between health care providers and patients.*** When something unexpected happens, a health care provider will clearly explain to you what is known about the event at the time and how it will affect your treatment. Health care providers will listen to your concerns, answer your questions to the best of their ability, and offer you emotional support and resources.
- 2. *Investigate the event to determine if it could have been prevented, and if so, how it will be prevented in the future.*** Health care organizations routinely review unanticipated harmful events. This review is done by a group of professionals and providers not involved in the patient's care to learn why it happened. We will keep you informed throughout this process. If we find that there was something that could have been done to prevent the harm to you, we will talk with you about these findings, and take action to prevent it from happening to other patients.
- 3. *Offer an apology, support the patient/family medically and emotionally, and, if appropriate, offer the patient/family compensation.*** We pledge to be transparent about all harmful, unanticipated healthcare events. Additionally, we are committed to supporting you and your family in any way that we can (please review the resources listed below). If our Patient Safety Team and the reviewers determine that you were significantly harmed *as the result of an error*, you will be offered compensation for the injury. If this occurs, you are encouraged to have an attorney advise you throughout this process.

**We want you to know that we're here to answer any questions and support you in any way that we can.**

### We have resources available here at the health care facility:

Patients and family members can contact the BIDMC Office of Patient Relations at 617-632-0364 or [patientrelations@caregroup.harvard.edu](mailto:patientrelations@caregroup.harvard.edu).

### For more support, you may wish to contact:

Medically Induced Trauma Support Services (MITSS), an independent support organization for injured patients, at 1-888-36MITSS or <http://www.mitss.org>.

This handout was developed by the Massachusetts Alliance for Communication and Resolution following Medical Injury (MACRMI). To learn more about the CARE program and to access more resources related to dealing with medical injury please visit [www.MACRMI.info](http://www.MACRMI.info).

