Patients for Patient Safety Canada
Principles of Disclosing Harm

Patients and families expect honest, empathic, and respectful communication with their healthcare providers especially when harm has occurred. Open disclosure helps the patient and their family, the healthcare providers involved, and the organization heal and learn from the harm, which helps make the system safer for all.

When patients have been harmed, they expect a sincere apology and an explanation of what has happened. They also need to see that the organization has accepted responsibility and is initiating changes and implementing actions to help prevent the harm from happening again.

Patients and families believe that when **harm may have occurred**, the patient* has the right to:
- be informed about the potential harm
- a comprehensive and timely investigation of the facts
- an opportunity to provide input into the investigation
- empathy, understanding, and support during what might be a very stressful time
- honest, open and transparent disclosure of the facts

Following this, when it has been found that **harm has occurred**, the patient* expects:
- to be fully informed about the harm in a timely manner
- an apology in a timely, respectful, and sincere manner
- acknowledgement of accountability and responsibility
- to receive a complete and comprehensive investigative report about the adverse event and to have these reports shared with appropriate individuals or agencies
- to be kept informed of how the harm will be prevented from happening again
- to be provided with opportunities to be part of the improvement process
- to be offered fair and timely compensation

If we can assist you in educating your staff and physicians about what is important to patients* when disclosing harm, please contact us at: info@patientsforpatientsafety.ca. Patients for Patient Safety Canada is a patient led program funded by the Canadian Patient Safety Institute with the vision of making every patient safe.

* Note: 'patient' may include the patient's family where appropriate/applicable