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"Medical Errors in Handling of Medico-Legal Case— A Call for Reform"

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In recent years, there has been a concerning increase in medical errors, particularly in the handling of medico-legal cases within hospitals. These are not just lapses in clinical judgment—they are errors with profound legal, ethical, and societal implications. Medico-legal cases often involve trauma, accidents, assaults, or deaths that may lead to legal proceedings. Errors in documenting, diagnosing, or managing such cases can compromise both patient rights and justice itself.

The causes of this troubling trend are multifaceted. Overburdened healthcare systems, insufficient medico-legal training among doctors, lack of standardized protocols, and poor coordination between medical and legal authorities contribute significantly. In many instances, junior doctors or interns—often without supervision—are tasked with crucial medico-legal responsibilities such as documentation of injuries, issuing certificates, or even performing autopsies. These tasks require not just clinical accuracy but also legal precision, something medical curricula often fail to emphasize adequately.

Compounding the issue is a lack of proper infrastructure and time-bound procedures. Many hospitals, particularly in rural or government settings, lack dedicated medico-legal units. Emergency departments are overcrowded and understaffed, leading to hasty examinations and flawed recordkeeping. Inadequate documentation, loss of crucial forensic evidence, or failure to maintain chain of custody can all lead to miscarriages of justice.

The consequences of these errors are grave. They can result in wrongful convictions, acquittals, or delayed justice, undermining public trust in both the medical and judicial systems. Moreover, doctors may find themselves embroiled in legal battles or subjected to professional disciplinary action, which can have career-long repercussions.

What is urgently needed is systemic reform. Medical education must place greater emphasis on forensic medicine and legal documentation, making it a core competence rather than a marginal subject. Hospitals should establish dedicated medico-legal cells staffed with trained personnel. Regular audits, training workshops, and collaboration between medical and legal experts can help bridge existing gaps.

Moreover, leveraging technology—such as electronic documentation systems, digital evidence tracking, and AI-assisted diagnostic tools—can significantly reduce the margin of human error. Policymakers must also step in to mandate clearer guidelines and allocate resources for proper medico-legal infrastructure across healthcare institutions.

In conclusion, the rising tide of medical errors in medico-legal cases is not merely a medical issue; it is a matter of justice. If left unaddressed, it threatens to erode both public confidence and the integrity of the healthcare system. It is time for a coordinated, cross-sectoral response that upholds the dual imperatives of medical ethics and legal accountability.

Dr Imran Sabri

Editor, IJMJ

Faculty Member,

Division of Forensic Medicine,

College of Medicine King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

Email: ikhana@kfu.edu.sa

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8754-0450>

Email: editor@ijmj.net