

# Medical errors outpace lawsuits

I have a high regard for the dedicated men and woman who are health-care professionals. However, sometimes even excellent professionals become careless and patients are injured.

Kerry Humes ("It's really insane," Nov. 24 Times letter) believes all medical care providers should get the same blanket immunity from medical malpractice lawsuits.

As an attorney who represents patients victimized by medical negligence, I believe those views represent a radical and dangerous notion.

Humes fingers "out of control" medical malpractice lawsuits for soaring health-care costs and medical malpractice insurance premiums. This often repeated allegation has not been borne out by the evidence.

In Iowa, where I practice law, there are fewer lawsuits every year. Last year, 166 medical/dental malpractice cases were filed—that is only about 1.5 cases per county.

Medical errors, on the other hand, are out of control. The Institute of Medicine estimates that 98,000 Americans are killed yearly by preventable medical errors. Reform should focus on increasing safety for patients, not shielding careless providers.

Laws that limit financial responsibility only lead to more deadly errors while padding insurance industry profits.

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