

The Importance of Apologies

Apology is a major part of a patient-centered system whether we are dealing with one another as patients, colleagues, educators, or trainees. As care providers, we would all benefit from reflection on appropriate opportunities for apology – the handling of adverse events provide excellent moments for reflection. In fact, patient surveys suggest that the majority of patients are dissatisfied with the handling of adverse events. Moreover, evidence shows that the system cost of adverse events decreases when an accepted apology takes place.

Apologies provide so much more than an admission of regret; these simple, but heartfelt statements allow for, accountability to be recognized and felt, feelings to be understood, trust to be rebuilt, discussion or dialogue to occur, and sometimes most importantly, hurt to be let go. In the need for an apology, most people are looking for a sincere acknowledgement and expression of understanding of their feelings. A true apology is part of both care and caring.

Apologies are supported and encouraged by Alberta Health Services
AHS Policy and Procedure Documents: www.albertahealthservices.ca/3916.asp
Sorry paired with apology is very powerful tool for healing.