

## 'Never events' need exposure

CNN recently reported that a surgeon removed the wrong kidney from a patient at a Massachusetts hospital. Similar tragedies happen too frequently in Florida. A "never event" is a shocking type of medical mistake that is particularly egregious because it is entirely preventable. Examples include leaving a sponge or instrument in a patient during an operation, operating on the wrong patient, or operating on the wrong body part.

In order to encourage hospitals and healthcare providers to provide safer medical care and decrease the incidence of these tragedies, Medicare, Medicaid and most insurance companies no longer pay for any medical care required as a result of never events. Unfortunately, these mistakes still occur on a regular basis. As an attorney representing victims of medical malpractice, I find this shocking and unacceptable.

So what can be done? Although Florida requires reporting of never events and other medical errors, the details of these reports are confidential. In order to enable patients to make appropriate decisions regarding their medical care, details of these reports, excluding the names of the victims but including the names of the hospitals and the names of the healthcare providers, must be available to the public.

***Dr. Harlan Wald is an attorney with the law firm Kelley/Uustal in Fort Lauderdale***