Iatrogenic

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Definition

Iatrogenic refers to a complication or adverse result of a medical therapy or diagnostic procedure that is inadvertently induced by a physician, psychologist, therapist, or other healthcare professionals.

Current Knowledge

Overview

Iatrogenic conditions almost exclusively refer to complications or adverse effects stemming from medical treatment, while the healthcare professional is often not blamed. In fact, sometimes an individual (patient) may react atypically to a medication or diagnostic procedure when compared

with the average person under similar conditions. More specifically, an individual's genetic makeup (e.g., genetic mutations) may variably predispose them to adversely react to certain medications. Yet, these types of outcomes are labeled idiosyncratic events by some and iatrogenic conditions by others. The term iatrogenic may appear vague to some individuals in part because its interpretation can be subjective and contextually influenced.

Iatrogenic Sources

Inhospital medical errors contribute to nearly 200,000 potentially preventable deaths a year in the United States, while nosocomial (i.e., an iatrogenic illness acquired during hospital care) infections kill approximately 100,000 hospitalized patients a year. Although this number may appear high, medical errors and nosocomial infections represent just a couple of iatrogenic sources. Other sources include but are not limited to misdiagnoses, polypharmacological interactions, adverse effects of prescription drugs, and blood transfusions.