Medical errors are the third leading cause of death in America, according to “Patient Safety,” an educational module from the AMA that helps medical residents better understand this vital topic, how to play a key role in reducing harm to patients and identify systemwide strategies to prevent adverse patient safety incidents.

The module is one of the AMA GME Competency Education Program offerings, which include nearly 30 courses that residents can access online through their institution’s subscription, on their own schedule.

Among the program’s experts are several who contributed to the AMA’s Health Systems Science textbook, which draws insights from faculty at medical schools that are part of the Association’s Accelerating Change in Medical Education consortium.

Modules cover five of the six topics—patient care, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and system-based practice—within the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education’s core competency requirements. The sixth requirement, medical knowledge, is one that is typically addressed during clinical education.

Being a part of patient safety

The “Patient Safety” module helps residents better understand ways to evaluate and improve safety processes around them by helping them:

- Identify the core components of patient safety.
- Define “safe and just culture” in a medical setting.
- Describe causes of adverse events.
Residents play a significant role in identifying, reporting, and mitigating lapses in patient safety and are integral to the overall patient safety process. That process should focus on what a health care organization is doing well and what needs improvement.

Rather than examining which individual might have made a mistake, examining the patient safety process should be about looking at the whole system of care, particularly because when an adverse event occurs, it’s usually because there were multiple smaller events along the way. The module walks through specific examples of common factors that lead to adverse patient events.

The “Patient Safety” module offers tips and techniques for residents to help reduce the risk of unnecessary harm to patients. It also reiterates that when it comes to a patient safety process, the goal should be to improve the health of every patient—not just identifying how to get sick people well, but also understanding how to prevent healthy people from getting sicker.

Visit the AMA GME Competency Education Program for more information on this and other offerings or to request a demo.