

**WUNC aired a story** about a pilot project in western North Carolina that seeks to reduce medical errors through anonymous reporting when a medical provider makes a mistake. This keeps the focus where it should be: patient safety. With all the talk about tort reform in the recent health care debates, patient safety was largely ignored. Tort reform deprives injured people of fair compensation and makes it more difficult to get into court, but tort reform does not focus on patient safety. This pilot project gets it right. Mistakes should be openly admitted so that there is some accountability in medicine and also so that similar mistakes can be avoided in the future. Now, with the assistance of a grant from the **federal Agency for Health Research and Quality**, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this pilot project is expanding to five other clinics in western North Carolina.

Many cases make it into the courtroom because a medical provider refused to admit a mistake, or even worse, covered it up. When people feel like they are being treated fairly and honestly, they are less likely to resort to litigation. The tort reform favored by some special interests will only increase the incentive to keep patients and their families in the dark. Tort reform will also increase the likelihood of continued medical malpractice because it does not encourage medical providers to address and correct medical errors.