

Risk Matters: Medical Malpractice Stress Syndrome



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Medical malpractice lawsuits are extremely stressful, and a topic that is seldom discussed is Medical Malpractice Stress Syndrome (“MMSS”). MMSS involves having a traumatic reaction to a malpractice claim or lawsuit, impacting the provider’s emotional and possibly physical health. The syndrome has been described as a “forme fruste” of posttraumatic stress disorder (“PTSD”).^[1] MMSS impacts not only the provider’s well-being, personal and professional relationships, and ability to assist in their own defense, but can also affect patient safety during and after the litigation.^[2]

One common recommendation to alleviate some of the effects of MMSS is provider empowerment via process knowledge and preparation.^[3] Since knowledge is power, SVMIC’s risk education programs for 2024 and 2025 will take a single medical malpractice lawsuit from pre-suit through the jury verdict. Click [here](#) for the 2024 live program schedule. Each phase of the litigation will be examined through the eyes of an experienced defense attorney, and recommendations will be given as to how providers

can better assist in their own defense.

Providers who believe they have or may have MMSS should discuss with their defense attorney and their SVMIC Claims attorney. Additionally, there are resources available in the [Litigation Support section](#) on the [Vantage®](#) policyholder portal. However you go about it, providers should seek appropriate professional help as necessary. MMSS is far more common than most providers would believe and asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

[1] Paterick ZR, Patel N, Chandrasekaran K, Tajik J, Paterick TE. **J Med Pract Manage.** 2017; 32:283–287.

[2] Vizcaíno-Rakosnik M, Martin-Fumadó C, Arimany-Manso J, Gómez-Durán EL. **J Patient Saf.** 2022; 18: 46–51.

[3] Charles SC. Coping with a medical malpractice suit. **West J Med.** 2001; 174:55–58.

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