

Doctors in the habit of hiding truth from patients

By Karen Kaplan, Los Angeles Times

Some things are better left unsaid – and that includes certain aspects of your medical condition, doctors say.

In a nationwide survey of roughly 1,800 physicians, 17 percent had some level of disagreement with the notion that they should “never tell a patient something that is not true.” Not only that, but 11 percent of those surveyed acknowledged that they had told a patient “something that was not true” in the past year.

The survey, led by Lisa Iezzoni, director of the Mongan Institute for Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, didn’t ask doctors for specifics about the type of untruths they told. But at least some of them were probably more than just spin – in another question, 55% of doctors admitted they had “described a patient’s prognosis in a more positive manner than warranted.”

One motivation for shading – or flat-out hiding – the truth appears to be the fear of being sued. The survey found that 34 percent did not completely agree that “all significant medical errors” should be disclosed to patients, with 20 percent saying they had withheld information about medical mistakes in the past year.

Read the whole story