

## World Patient Safety Day 2022: Learning about Medication Errors



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Medication error has been defined as “a reduction in the probability of treatment being timely and effective, or an increase in the risk of harm relating to medicines and prescribing compared with generally accepted practice” (WHO, 2016; 4).

Serious medication errors lead to undesirable outcomes, including but not limited to poor quality of life, poor patient experience and adverse drug reactions. Consequently, this can lead to increased hospital admissions, increased use of health services, and even death.

Causes of medication errors:

Several errors can occur when administering a drug to a patient. Some of these errors include dose miscalculations, incorrect diagnosis which can lead to prescription errors, incorrect drug administration, poor drug distribution practices, failure to communicate with patients, and drug-device problems.

The Global Challenge on Medication Safety, developed by [WHO](#), comprises five specific objectives to strengthen systems and practices within countries.

1. Assess the amount of harm avoidable. This can be achieved through robust monitoring systems to detect and track this harm.
2. Create a framework for action to improve ordering, prescribing, preparation, dispensing, administration and monitoring practices.
3. Develop the technologies and tools to facilitate the set-up of safer medication use systems.
4. Engage stakeholders and industry to raise awareness and jointly mobilise efforts to facilitate improvements.
5. Empower patients to adapt to a more active role in managing their medications.

Medication errors have a greater impact in certain clinical circumstances, including inpatient care. This may be related to the fact that more acute and serious clinical situations may use more complex medication regimes. In these circumstances, medication errors may relate to the wrong administration, wrong dose, or failure to commit to treatment regimens. It is critical to identify where there is a higher risk of harm from medicines so that technologies and tools may be prioritised to help healthcare professionals avoid a high risk of harm.

### Prevention

Prevention of medical errors lies within healthcare systems, healthcare providers and the patients themselves. Empowering patients to act by staying informed about their medications means errors can be avoided, thereby contributing to the safe use of medication.

Source: [WHO Medication Without Harm](#)

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