

## **Medication administration errors from a nursing viewpoint: a formal consensus of definition and scenarios using a Delphi technique**

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### **Abstract :**

**Aims and objectives:** To develop and achieve formal consensus on a definition of medication administration errors (MAEs) and scenarios that should or should not be considered as MAEs in hospitalised patient settings.

**Background:** MAEs occur frequently in hospitalised patient settings. Currently, there is no formal consensus on a definition of MAEs or scenarios that should or should not be considered as MAEs.

**Design:** This was a descriptive study using Delphi technique.

**Methods:** A panel of experts (n=50) recruited from major hospitals, nursing schools and universities in Palestine took part in the study. Three Delphi rounds were followed to achieve consensus on a proposed definition of MAEs and a series of 61 scenarios representing potential MAE situations formulated into a questionnaire.

**Results:** In the first Delphi round, key contact nurses' views on MAEs were explored. In the second Delphi round, consensus was achieved to accept the proposed definition of MAEs and to include 36 (59%) scenarios and exclude 1 (1.6%) as MAEs. In the third Delphi round, consensus was achieved to consider further 14 (23%) and exclude 2 (3.3%) as MAEs while the remaining 8 (13.1%) were considered equivocal. Of the 61 scenarios included in the Delphi process, experts decided to include 50 scenarios as MAEs, exclude 3 scenarios and include or exclude 8 scenarios depending on the individual clinical situation.

**Conclusion:** Consensus on a definition and scenarios representing MAEs can be achieved using formal consensus techniques.

**Relevance to clinical practice:** Researchers should be aware that using different definitions of MAEs, inclusion or exclusion of MAE situations could significantly affect the rate of MAEs reported in their studies. Consensual definitions and MAE situations can be used in future epidemiology studies investigating MAEs in hospitalised patient settings which may permit and promote direct comparisons of different studies.

**Key words:** Consensus, Delphi technique, definition of error, medication administration errors, medication errors, nursing