

Effective Medication Administration

The 2006 Institute of Medicine report that cited 1.5 million people are harmed annually by medication errors takes into account not only the incorrect administration of medication, but also the failure to prescribe or administer medication. Technology can solve a majority of the problems linked to medication errors by reducing variation and ensuring compliance. **Some of the main reasons errors occur include nurse and pharmacy staffing shortages**, high patient acuity, illegible handwriting, and medication distribution process problems. Barcodes and radio-frequency identification are the mainstays of medication administration improvements among hospitals, but these solutions are vulnerable to error as well, especially if wireless networks go down or laptop batteries fail. **To ensure problems are caught early, hospitals must see that staff is trained and continues to train** throughout implementation, examine room size and the weight of computer devices, and ensure metrics are defined beforehand, compliance is policed and medication administration begins at order entry and ends at the bedside.

From "Effective Medication Administration"

Advance for Health Information Executives (06/09) Vol. 13, No. 6, P. 21; Ganguly, Indranil (Neal)