

## Advocacy Advice for Hospital Pharmacists

### *Special Interest Group Working Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm*

The advocacy advice put together by the Special Interest Group (SIG) Working Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm of the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) seeks to offer tools to hospital pharmacists that can be used when advocating for the practical implementation of change that aims at eliminating avoidable harm.

#### HOW SHOULD YOU APPROACH DECISION-MAKERS?

One of the first actors you should engage with is the **managerial staff in the hospital**. Such meetings can provide you and your colleagues with the opportunity to discuss necessary changes in the hospital pharmacy, as well as with the possibility of bringing up new developments in the field.

When engaging with your hospital manager, it is important to appeal to his/her heart and mind. It is useful to put yourself in the shoes of your counterpart. Consequently, make sure that your speaking points outline what hospital pharmacists can do for the hospital to eliminate avoidable harm and how your contributions can be aligned with the goals and needs of your hospital manager when it comes to preventing system errors.

To ensure that you have enough time to share your ideas with the decision-makers in your hospital, **request a meeting date with your hospital manager**. Prior to this conversation, make sure to create a clear plan outlining the points that you want to bring up during the meeting.

#### *What should I prepare?*

Everyone receiving or paying for a service is usually interested in obtaining information on the value of the service. The same concept can be applied to the healthcare sector, which is constantly striving for cost reduction while maintaining a high level of care. The patient who receives a service as well as the provider or hospital manager who pays for this service is interested in obtaining information on the value of the service. **Value in this context is understood as a measurable improvement in patient**

outcomes that is affordable for the overall health system. It is therefore essential for hospital pharmacists to collect evidence in relation to the added value of the services offered by the profession.

For example, the classification and characterisation of medication errors collected by EAHP’s SIG members identified specific problems within the institution, including its human and technical resources, as well as slips/lapses and mistakes that could have been avoided.

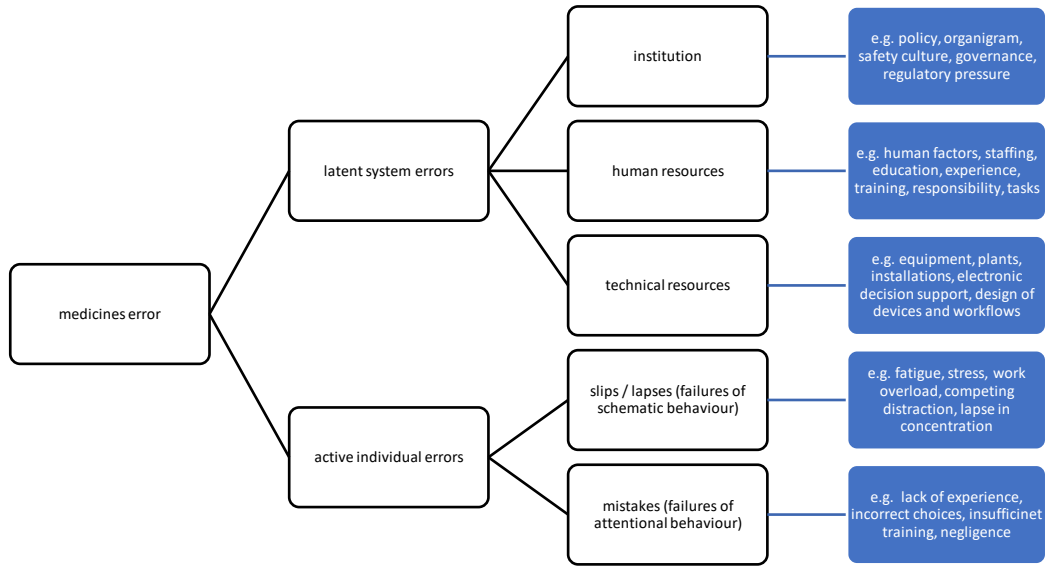


Figure 1 – Classification of medicines errors by EAHP’s Special Interest Group Working Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm.

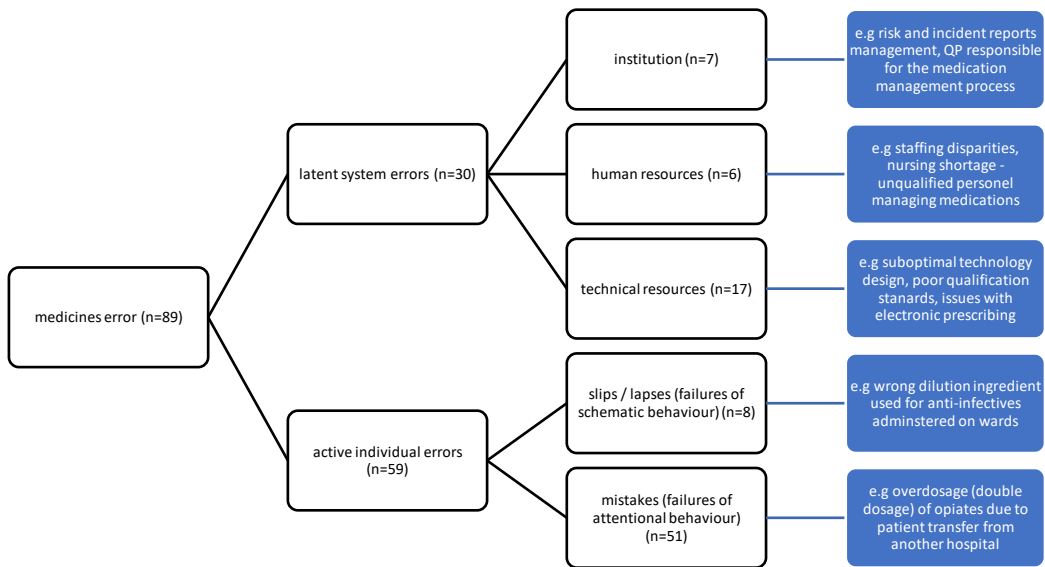


Figure 2 – Mapping of incidents within the error classification system of EAHP’s Special Interest Group Working Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm.

To drive forward change within your hospital, you and your pharmacy colleagues should conduct a similar medication error mapping to identify problems that are frequently occurring.

*Which points should I bring up?*

This is left up to you since you know the needs of your hospital pharmacy better than anybody else. But **be sure to clearly identify your priorities and to prepare supporting evidence for all your arguments**. In particular, you should not forget to take along all the documents and all the ideas you have brainstormed together with your colleagues in the hospital pharmacy. In case you are however still looking for some input, we have prepared some advice for you.

**Showcase what you do on a day-to-day basis!**

Hospital pharmacists are involved in many different activities that can help eliminate avoidable harm. Is your hospital manager aware of all the good you are doing each day? If not or if his/her knowledge can be improved, share details and anecdotes from your daily work with him/her.

**Discuss the added value that your service brings to the hospital!**

The existence of a hospital pharmacy contributes to the proper functioning of each and every hospital. You are, for instance, the person responsible for making sure that medicines reach the patient. You are also in charge of solving medicines shortage problems that arise. However, it might not always be the case that your management knows about your added value. Be sure to detail situations when you and your staff prevented medication overuse or errors. If these data are not currently at hand, you could discuss the possibility of actually engaging in an assessment of different aspects related to pharmacotherapeutic pathways inside your hospital, such as an analysis of different dispensing methodologies with the aim of pinpointing errors on specific wards, prescription assessments or medicines reconciliation piloting. One of the most important arguments you can bring to the table is the number of resources that could be/are more efficiently used with your help and the types and level of costs that could have been avoided by the hospital management thanks to your involvement.

**Ask for the expansion of your service!**

Be bold and ask your hospital manager to acknowledge that your role within the hospital can and should be expanded in light of new models of care that are being developed in other healthcare settings. Clinical pharmacy services are, for instance, a great way to support doctors and nurses in the field of patient adherence.

**Bring up improvement suggestions!**

Not everything might be working perfectly in your hospital. To address medication errors that could be lowered with the help of technology, have you for instance considered introducing single-unit barcode dose scanning in your hospital? Show initiative and bring up your ideas during meetings

with your hospital manager. Action can only be taken if you share your suggestions. To get your manager on board, make sure to prepare evidence that backs up your proposal.

**Bring up case reports and feedback!**

One of the best ways to drive forward change is to bring up and discuss case reports on how your work supports and improves that of your colleagues in ensuring better patient outcomes. Since patients are the end beneficiary of your care, it would also be useful to gather their treatment stories and, if available, their feedback on your work specifically.

**Share the developments within the profession that are happening all across Europe!**

The comparison of national minimum quality requirements conducted by the members of EAHP's SIG showed that approaches differ from country to country. Exchange with colleagues working across Europe to learn more about their practices and hospital pharmacy developments. Maybe some of the measures implemented by them could be picked up by your hospital.

#### What should I bring to the meeting?

- A clear plan outlining the points you want to address;
- Well-prepared arguments;
- Supporting evidence;
- A plan that outlines how you and the other healthcare professionals should implement your key asks in case your manager agrees;
- Personal or patient stories on how your work supports or improves therapeutic outcomes.

Since some changes might be more effective if implemented at the regional, national or even European level, advocacy work should be carried out with your national hospital pharmacy association vis-à-vis the Chamber of Pharmacy, the Medicines Agency and the Ministry of Health. Funding questions are best addressed by these entities as are discrepancies between legal requirements.