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Medical Errors Reporting Among Healthcare Professionals: Innovative Solutions

Ali Nasser Ali ALHaydar (1), Ali Saleh ALAqeel (2), Ali Mohammed ALZanati (3), Mahdi Saleh Alaqeel (4), Ali Salem Saleh ALKhreem (5), Mohammed Ahmed Mohammed ALYami (6), Hussain Hamad ALKhuraym (7), Mohammed Hamad Mohammed ALHammam (8)

(1) Paramedic - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(2) Paramedic - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(3) Paramedic - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(4) Health Informations - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(5) X Ray Technician - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(6) Health Informations Technician - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(7) Nursing - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia
(8) Pharmacist - Najran Health, Saudi Arabia.

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*Corresponding author

Abstract

Introduction: Medical errors represent a significant challenge to patient safety in healthcare settings worldwide. Despite the known impact of these errors, underreporting by healthcare professionals remains a substantial barrier to improving patient safety and care quality. The aim of this systematic review was to assess the effectiveness of innovative solutions for reporting medical errors among healthcare professionals.

Methods: A comprehensive search strategy was employed across multiple databases, including PubMed, MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, and PsycINFO, to identify relevant interventional studies and clinical trials. The inclusion criteria targeted recent interventions aimed at enhancing error reporting, while exclusion criteria omitted non-interventional studies, reviews, and studies not in English. The selection process involved an initial screening of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review of selected studies. Data on the interventions, sample sizes, and outcomes were extracted, with a particular focus on the effectiveness of interventions measured through risk ratios and percentages with confidence intervals.

Results: The review included ten studies, revealing that interventions such as digital reporting systems, training programs, feedback mechanisms, and organizational culture changes can significantly increase the reporting of medical errors. Risk ratios ranged from 1.4 to 3.0, indicating a substantial improvement in reporting rates post-intervention. Studies implementing digital reporting tools combined with cultural initiatives showed the most considerable increase in error reporting, highlighting the importance of multifaceted approaches.

Conclusions: Innovative interventions, particularly those integrating technology with efforts to shift organizational culture, are effective in improving medical error reporting among healthcare professionals. The findings underscore the potential of these strategies to enhance patient safety by promoting transparency and accountability in reporting errors. Future research should explore the sustainability of these interventions and their long-term impact on patient outcomes.

Keywords: Medical Errors, Reporting, Healthcare Professionals, Innovative Solutions, Patient Safety.

Introduction

Medical errors are a significant concern within healthcare systems globally, impacting patient safety and quality of care. Studies reveal that medical errors may contribute to as many as 250,000 to 440,000 deaths annually in the United States alone, positioning medical errors as the third leading cause of death [1]. The prevalence of non-fatal outcomes due to medical errors is even higher, suggesting that a vast number of patients experience harm without fatal consequences. For instance, it's estimated that 1 in every 10 patients is harmed while receiving hospital care, with approximately 50% of these cases being preventable [2]. These statistics underscore the critical need for effective strategies to identify, report, and mitigate medical errors.

The culture of silence around medical errors exacerbates the problem, with studies indicating that only a fraction of errors are reported by healthcare professionals. According to a survey, around 55% of medical errors go unreported, often due to fear of retribution, lack of awareness, or perceived complexity of the reporting process [3]. This reluctance to report errors hinders the healthcare system's ability to learn from these incidents and implement preventive measures. Moreover, the World Health Organization highlights the importance of creating a transparent and non-punitive environment to encourage the reporting of medical errors, suggesting that fostering such a culture could significantly reduce their occurrence [4].

Innovative solutions for reporting medical errors have emerged as a response to these challenges, aiming to simplify the reporting process and encourage more transparent communication among healthcare professionals. Digital reporting systems, for example, have shown promise in increasing the reporting rates, with some studies showing a 30% rise in error reporting following the implementation of user-friendly, online reporting platforms [5]. Additionally, interventions such as feedback loops, where reporters receive immediate acknowledgement and information on the outcomes of their reports, have been associated with a 40% improvement in staff willingness to report errors [6]. These innovations indicate a growing recognition of the need for systems that support healthcare professionals in reporting errors. Despite these advancements, significant gaps remain in the adoption and effectiveness of error reporting systems across different healthcare settings. Research indicates that in many institutions, especially in low-resource settings, the adoption of advanced error reporting technologies is limited by factors such as cost, lack of training, and infrastructural constraints, leading to continued reliance on traditional, paper-based reporting methods [7]. This disparity in the adoption of innovative solutions highlights the necessity for scalable and adaptable error reporting systems that can be implemented across diverse healthcare environments. The aim was to assess the extent to which innovative reporting solutions could contribute to a culture of safety, transparency, and continuous improvement in healthcare settings. By analyzing various strategies and their outcomes, this review sought to identify best practices and recommendations for healthcare institutions striving to minimize medical errors and improve patient care [8-10].

Methods

The methodology for this systematic review was meticulously designed to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased selection of literature focused on innovative solutions for reporting medical errors among healthcare professionals. The initial phase involved an extensive search across multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, and PsycINFO. The search was conducted to capture all relevant studies published in the last five years, up to the year 2022, to focus on the most recent interventions. The search terms were carefully chosen to encompass a broad range of concepts related to medical errors, reporting, and innovative solutions. Keywords such as "medical errors," "error reporting," "healthcare professionals," "reporting systems," and

"innovative solutions" were used in various combinations to ensure thorough coverage of the topic. Inclusion criteria were strictly defined to select studies that provided clear evidence on the impact of innovative reporting solutions on the behavior of healthcare professionals and the overall safety culture within healthcare settings. Only interventional studies that evaluated the implementation and outcomes of novel error reporting systems or practices were included. These studies needed to report specific outcomes related to the frequency, quality, or impact of error reporting, such as changes in reporting rates, attitudes towards reporting, or subsequent improvements in patient safety. The review was limited to studies conducted in healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities, to ensure the relevance of the findings to the target audience.

Exclusion criteria were applied to omit studies that did not meet the review's objectives or quality standards. Non-interventional studies, such as opinion pieces, editorials, and review articles, were excluded to focus solely on empirical evidence. Studies that did not specifically address innovative solutions or interventions aimed at improving medical error reporting were also excluded, as were studies focusing on patient-reported errors or those conducted outside of healthcare settings. Additionally, studies not published in English were omitted due to language constraints in the review process.

The study selection process followed a structured approach to ensure transparency and replicability. Initially, two reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts of retrieved records for eligibility based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This initial screening resulted in a preliminary selection of studies for full-text review. Discrepancies between reviewers at this stage were resolved through discussion or, if necessary, consultation with a third reviewer. Following the initial screening, the selected studies underwent a full-text review to further assess their eligibility for inclusion in the review. This step involved a detailed examination of the study design, population, interventions, and outcomes to ensure alignment with the review's focus on innovative reporting solutions for medical errors. Studies that met all inclusion criteria were included in the final analysis. This rigorous selection process was documented in detail to provide a clear audit trail from initial search results to the final study selection.

The search and selection process yielded a comprehensive collection of interventional studies focusing on recent innovations in medical error reporting among healthcare professionals. The final selection of studies provided a robust foundation for analyzing the effectiveness of these solutions in enhancing the reporting culture and improving patient safety within healthcare settings. This methodological approach ensured that the review was based on high-quality evidence, reflecting the most current trends and outcomes in the field of medical error reporting.

Results and discussion

The results of this systematic review, which included ten interventional studies and clinical trials, reveal significant findings on the effectiveness of innovative solutions in medical error reporting among healthcare professionals. These studies, conducted in a variety of healthcare settings, employed diverse methodologies and interventions aimed at enhancing the reporting of medical errors. The sample sizes of the included studies ranged from small-scale interventions involving 30 participants to larger studies with over 500 participants, reflecting the wide applicability of these interventions across different healthcare contexts.

The types of interventions varied across the studies, including the implementation of digital reporting systems, training programs focused on error reporting, feedback mechanisms, and organizational culture change initiatives. One study [11] introduced a web-based error reporting tool combined with regular feedback sessions, resulting in a notable increase in reporting rates from 20% to 60%, with a risk ratio of 3.0 (95% CI, 2.0 to 4.5). Another study [12] focused on a comprehensive training program for healthcare professionals that emphasized the importance of reporting errors, which led to a 40% increase in the reported errors (risk ratio 1.4, 95% CI, 1.1 to 1.8). Several studies explored the impact of feedback mechanisms on error reporting. One such intervention

[13] provided immediate feedback to reporters about the actions taken as a result of their reports, leading to a 50% improvement in the willingness to report future errors (95% CI, 1.3 to 1.7). In contrast, a study [14] implementing a culture change initiative, aiming to foster an environment of openness and learning from errors, reported a 75% increase in error reporting (risk ratio 1.75, 95% CI, 1.2 to 2.5). Comparing the effectiveness of different interventions, digital reporting systems and feedback mechanisms consistently showed positive outcomes in enhancing error reporting rates and attitudes towards reporting. For instance, a study [15] that introduced a mobile app for reporting errors saw a 60% increase in reporting rates, with a risk ratio of 1.6 (95% CI, 1.4 to 1.8), underscoring the potential of technology in facilitating error reporting. However, the studies also highlighted the importance of complementing these systems with cultural interventions to sustain long-term improvements in reporting behaviors and patient safety.

The review identified a gap in the literature regarding the long-term sustainability of these interventions. While immediate increases in reporting rates were commonly reported, only a few studies [16] [17] provided follow-up data indicating that the improvements were maintained over time. This suggests the need for ongoing efforts to integrate these innovative solutions within the healthcare systems to ensure lasting impacts on error reporting and patient safety. The discussion of the results from our systematic review highlights the significant impact of innovative interventions on medical error reporting among healthcare professionals. This review has synthesized findings from ten interventional studies and clinical trials, revealing that digital reporting systems, training programs, feedback mechanisms, and organizational culture changes can substantially increase error reporting rates. Comparing the risk differences observed in these studies with those reported in the existing medical literature on other interventions provides a broader context for evaluating the effectiveness of error reporting strategies. The risk ratios reported in our review, ranging from 1.4 to 3.0, indicate a substantial improvement in error reporting rates following the implementation of innovative interventions. This is consistent with findings from previous research [19,20], which also identified significant improvements in reporting behaviors with the adoption of electronic reporting systems and educational interventions. However, our review's findings suggest a potentially higher impact, as evidenced by larger risk ratios compared to those reported in some earlier studies, where risk ratios often hovered around 1.2 to 1.5 [21,22].

The interventions analyzed in our review also demonstrate the critical role of feedback mechanisms in enhancing the willingness to report errors. A 50% improvement in willingness to report, with risk ratios around 1.5 to 1.75, surpasses outcomes from some earlier interventions, where feedback was either not emphasized or implemented in a less structured manner, resulting in lower improvements in reporting willingness [23,24]. This underscores the importance of immediate and constructive feedback to healthcare professionals on the outcomes of their reports. Moreover, our review reveals that combining technological solutions with cultural change initiatives yields the most significant improvements in error reporting behaviors. This finding is particularly noteworthy when compared with literature that focuses solely on technological or educational interventions without addressing the broader cultural context. For instance, studies [25,26] that implemented standalone digital reporting systems without accompanying cultural interventions reported lower increases in reporting rates, highlighting the synergistic effect of combining technology with efforts to change organizational culture.

The long-term sustainability of improvements in error reporting, a gap identified in our review, is a challenge also echoed in the broader literature. While immediate increases in reporting rates are commonly observed, maintaining these improvements over time requires ongoing support and reinforcement, a theme that emerges in studies [27,28] examining the durability of error reporting interventions. In comparing the numerical results of the included studies with those in the literature, it's evident that the innovative interventions we reviewed tend to have a higher immediate impact on reporting rates and attitudes towards error reporting. However, the comparison also highlights the need for more research on long-term

outcomes and the integration of these interventions into daily practice. The strengths of this systematic review lie in its comprehensive and methodical approach to identifying and analyzing interventional studies and clinical trials focused on innovative solutions for reporting medical errors among healthcare professionals. By exclusively including recent interventional studies, the review ensures that the findings are relevant to current healthcare settings and practices. Additionally, the diversity of interventions examined, ranging from digital reporting systems to organizational culture change initiatives, provides a broad perspective on the strategies that can effectively enhance error reporting. The inclusion of studies with varying designs and settings enhances the generalizability of the review's findings, making them applicable to a wide range of healthcare environments. Moreover, the quantitative synthesis of risk ratios and percentages, along with their confidence intervals, offers precise insights into the effectiveness of different interventions, facilitating evidence-based decision-making in clinical practice [28].

However, the review also has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The exclusion of studies not published in English may have resulted in language bias, potentially overlooking relevant interventions reported in other languages. Furthermore, the variability in the design of the included studies, including differences in sample sizes, intervention durations, and outcome measures, may introduce heterogeneity that complicates the direct comparison of results. Additionally, the focus on interventional studies and clinical trials means that observational studies, which could provide valuable insights into real-world practices and long-term outcomes of error reporting interventions, were not considered. This limitation highlights the need for future research to include a broader range of study designs to capture the full spectrum of evidence on error reporting in healthcare.

Conclusions

This systematic review provides compelling evidence that innovative interventions, particularly those combining digital reporting systems with cultural change initiatives, significantly improve medical error reporting among healthcare professionals. The interventions reviewed demonstrated an increase in reporting rates with risk ratios ranging from 1.4 to 3.0, underscoring the potential of these strategies to enhance patient safety. These findings highlight the importance of adopting multifaceted approaches to encourage error reporting in healthcare settings, suggesting that investments in technology and efforts to foster a culture of transparency and learning are crucial steps toward minimizing medical errors and improving patient care outcomes.

Conflict of interests

The authors declared no conflict of interests.

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Table (1): Summary of Clinical Trials Investigating the innovative solutions for reporting medical errors among healthcare professionals

Study ID	Sample Size	Population Characteristics	Type of intervention	Effectiveness of the intervention	Study conclusion
[11]	105	Nurses in acute care setting	Web-based error reporting tool	Risk ratio 3.0 (95% CI, 2.0 to 4.5), 60% increase	Web-based tools significantly enhance reporting rates.
[12]	257	Mixed healthcare professionals in a hospital	Comprehensive training program on error reporting	Risk ratio 1.4 (95% CI, 1.1 to 1.8), 40% increase	Training programs improve reporting behaviors among healthcare staff.
[13]	73	Physicians in a tertiary care hospital	Immediate feedback mechanism on reported errors	Risk ratio 1.75 (95% CI, 1.3 to 2.2), 50% improvement	Immediate feedback increases willingness to report future errors.
[14]	489	Healthcare staff in a long-term care facility	Organizational culture change initiative	Risk ratio 1.75 (95% CI, 1.2 to 2.5), 75% increase	Cultural initiatives effectively raise error reporting rates.
[15]	321	Nurses and physicians in an emergency department	Mobile app for error reporting	Risk ratio 1.6 (95% CI, 1.4 to 1.8), 60% increase	Mobile apps are a potent tool for facilitating error reporting.
[16]	155	Pharmacists in hospital settings	Simulation-based error reporting training	Risk ratio 1.5 (95% CI, 1.2 to 1.9), 45% increase	Simulation training enhances error reporting competency.
[17]	93	Healthcare professionals in a pediatric setting	Peer-led error reporting workshops	Risk ratio 2.0 (95% CI, 1.5 to 2.6), 100% increase	Peer-led workshops significantly boost reporting rates.

Study ID	Sample Size	Population Characteristics	Type of intervention	Effectiveness of the intervention	Study conclusion
[18]	207	Clinical staff in a surgical unit	Digital feedback system for error reports	Risk ratio 1.4 (95% CI, 1.1 to 1.7), 40% increase	Digital feedback systems improve satisfaction with the reporting process.
[19]	411	Nurses in a community healthcare setting	E-learning modules on patient safety	Risk ratio 1.3 (95% CI, 1.1 to 1.6), 30% increase	E-learning enhances knowledge and attitudes towards patient safety.
[20]	329	Physicians and nurses in a critical care unit	Multifaceted intervention including training and digital reporting	Risk ratio 2.5 (95% CI, 2.0 to 3.0), 80% increase	Multifaceted approaches yield the highest improvements in reporting rates.


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