



EBN Report: World Patient Safety Day 2022 'Medication Safety'

World Patient Safety Day was set up in 2019 by the World Health Organisation to increase public awareness and engagement, enhance global understanding, and work towards global solidarity and action to enhance patient safety and reduce patient harm. On 17th September 2022, [World Patient Safety Day is focussed on 'Medication Safety'](#), with the slogan 'medication without harm'. Currently, the WHO states that medication harm accounts for [50% of the overall preventable harm in medical care](#), and that US \$42 billion of global total health expenditure worldwide can be avoided if medication errors are prevented.

The European Biosafety Network aligns with these core principles, the network was originally launched with a commitment to improve the safety of patients and healthcare and non-healthcare workers. It is not only patients who are negatively affected by medication errors, healthcare professionals involved directly or indirectly in adverse events can suffer emotionally as a consequence.

In Europe, research about mental and psychosocial health in healthcare and its potential linkage to medication errors and adverse events is limited. In particular, very little is known about the incidence of error in non-hospital settings or the harm caused by it. According to the WHO, medication errors occur when unreliable medication systems and/or human factors such as fatigue and lack of health care workers affect the practice of prescribing, dispensing, administering and monitoring medication. The most frequent errors occur during the medication administration phase in hospitals.

According to the [available research](#), the most common emotional reactions of affected healthcare professionals include: anxiety, obnubilation, confusion, difficulty concentrating on tasks, depersonalisation, frustration, guilt, sadness, mood changes, insomnia, constant replaying of the incident, lack of professional confidence, and fear of legal action and loss of reputation.

Looking at the specific impact of medication errors on healthcare professionals, earlier this year the EBN commissioned research from Ipsos MORI on the type and rate of mental and psychosocial disorders amongst hospital nurses, their causes and effects and whether they are linked to a medication error causing a serious adverse event. The survey was conducted between the end of October 2021 to late January 2022 and included 350 hospital nurses who have suffered mental health or psychosocial issues (out of 523 nurses contacted).

Key findings of the research included:

- Amongst European nurses there is a high incidence rate of mental and psychosocial health issues and disorders.
- **Two thirds** of hospital nurses have suffered from mental and psychosocial health issues, especially in Italy and Poland, and among oncology nurses.
- **Over half** of nurses have NOT received any professional and adequate psychological therapy. Those who have received help have mainly paid for the therapy themselves.
- **Anxiety** is the main mental and psychosocial health disorder that nurses are suffering, and this has mainly occurred during the COVID pandemic, leading to **chronic workplace stress**.

- **Increased pressure of work and stress and lack of staff and resources** are stated to be the main reasons for these mental and psychosocial disorders.

The results of the survey demonstrate that a reduction in medication errors does not only directly improve patient safety, but when healthcare professionals are considered, that it also improves worker safety. The EBN will continue to support the WHO's Patient Safety campaign and this year's theme of 'Medication Safety', particularly its encompassing of second victims and the ongoing impact on psychosocial health follow a medication error event.

Under this campaign, the EBN calls for a European observatory on the mental health and wellbeing of healthcare workers, promotion of healthcare workers wellbeing, implementation of medication traceability systems and the promotion of a "Just Culture" environment.