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Interruptions in nursing work: Safety in the preparation and administration of the drug

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Objective: To investigate the relationship between the prevalence of errors in medication process and interruptions in the nursing work in medical clinic inpatient units in two public hospitals in the Federal District, Brazil.

Method: Observational, comparative and exploratory quantitative character. Data were collected from July 2012 to May 2014. The sample consisted of health professionals involved in the medication process, 8 in the Hospital 1 and 18 in the Hospital 2.

Results: In Hospital 1, 484 doses were observed and a total of 865 errors, of which 464 (56.3%) were directly related to work interruptions. In Hospital 2, 415 doses were observed and 583 medication errors, and these 118 (24.4%) were associated with interruptions.

Conclusions: Work interruptions negatively influence the medication process, jeopardizing patient safety. Risk management measures should be implemented in order to reduce sources of interruptions in nursing work and reduce the chance of adverse medication events.