

Reporting Errors to ISMP

Have you ever wondered what happened to those error reports that you submitted to the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP)? Does anyone review them, or do they get filed away with thousands of other reports? According to the ISMP (2020), every error report undergoes a thorough review process. Here's an outline of the ISMP procedures:

- Error report is received and entered into the ISMP database.
- ISMP staff (nurse or pharmacy analyst) review every report and attempt to gather additional information.
- Unique patient identifiers and/or facility information is removed and the analyst distributes the reports (including pictures or attachments) via a secure portal to all ISMP interdisciplinary staff.
- The interdisciplinary staff review every report, identify similar hazards, errors, or related resources; drafts questions to better understand the report; and makes recommendations to reduce the risk.
- The analyst will send questions to the reporter to gain further information about the event and its causes.
- Each report is sent to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the manufacturers of the involved products (medications, devices, and technology) based on the reporter's permission.
- After initial review, ISMP team determines if the reported event needs further investigation for possible sharing with the healthcare community. The ISMP team takes into consideration the following:
 - Is this a new issue?
 - Does the error involve a common or unusual contributing factor?
 - Can the error, or did the error cause patient harm?
 - Does the error require action by an external organization (i.e. FDA, manufacturer, vendor, licensing agency, legislature)?
- Once the team determines which errors need further investigation, they reach out to the reporter to gain more information on the event, ask clarifying questions to determine individual- and system-based factors, and to provide support to the reporter as needed.
- ISMP team will research the literature, drug information, ISMP error-reporting databases and guidelines to identify ISMP recommendations.
- ISMP team may seek expert advice from advisory groups with knowledge in the area.
- ISMP team will discuss the error with the FDA who may search the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) for similar errors.
- ISMP team contacts the product manufacturer, medical device or technology vendor to discuss the error, to ask if the company is aware of similar reports, and make recommendations to prevent further risks.
- Based on the information gathered, the ISMP team will make recommendations to prevent the error, reduce risk, and/or mitigate patient harm.
 - These recommendations are shared with health care providers through their newsletters.
 - Strategies are reviewed by ISMP professional staff and an external peer-review advisory group.
- ISMP will analyze aggregated data from the error-reporting databases on specific issues.

Reference

1. Institute for Safe Medication Practices. (2020). *Nurse Advise-ERR*. Retrieved from Institute for Safe Medication Practices: <http://www.ismp.org/newsletters/nursing/issues/NurseAdviseERR202001.pdf>

While reporting errors can be a time-consuming process, this work contributes to improving patient safety. Hundreds of product labels have been changed to reduce mix-ups, safer medication systems have been developed and guidelines/standards have been improved.

Reference

1. Institute for Safe Medication Practices. (2020). *Nurse Advise-ERR*. Retrieved from Institute for Safe Medication Practices: <http://www.ismp.org/newsletters/nursing/issues/NurseAdviseERR202001.pdf>