AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: To evaluate nurses’ knowledge of guidelines for preventing infections associated with peripheral venous catheters.

BACKGROUND: Guidelines for the prevention of intravascular catheter-related infections are an important tool to help healthcare professionals minimise the risk of infection. However, they are not always applied by nurses. The literature on this topic is limited, and no study examined this matter for peripheral venous catheters.

DESIGN: This cross-sectional study was carried out from November 2011-June 2012.

METHODS: The nurses’ knowledge of peripheral venous catheter guidelines and its association with gender, experience, education and the ward membership was assessed using a validated questionnaire.

RESULTS: Sixteen hospitals from six regions of Italy participated, and 933 questionnaires were collected. Most participants were female (70·1%), undergraduate (51·8%), worked in
medical (35.8%) and surgical departments (28.0%), and had >10 years of experience (55.0%). The median score on 10 questions was 6 of 10. A majority of nurses knew it is recommended to replace peripheral venous catheters routinely (90.0%), to perform an aseptic technique during connecting/disconnecting the infusive lines (55.2%), and to replace the administration set

CONCLUSION: The sample of nurses’ knowledge to some recommendations is frequently low. This could be a potential risk factor for patient safety. The results should sensitise healthcare managers to improve nursing training and education, according to clinical risk management perspectives.

RELEVANCE TO CLINICAL PRACTICE: These data request for more emphasis on international guidelines in infection prevention initiatives.