
Abstract:

Background: Medication errors are recognized causes of patient morbidity and mortality in hospital settings, and can occur at any stage of the medication management process. Medication administration errors are reported to occur more frequently in critical care settings, and can be associated with severe consequences. However, patient safety research tends to focus on accident causations rather than organizational factors which enhance patient safety and health care resilience to unsafe practice. The Organizational Safety Space Model was developed for high-risk industries to investigate factors that influence organizational safety. Its application in health care settings may offer a unique approach to understand organizational safety in the health care context, particularly in investigating the safety of medication administration in adult critical care settings.

Purpose: This literature review explores the development and use of the Organizational Safety Space Model in the industrial context, and considers its application in investigating the safety of medication administration in adult critical care settings.

Search strategies (inclusion and exclusion criteria): CINAHL, Medline, British Nursing Index (BNI) and PsychInfo databases were searched for peer-reviewed papers, published in English, from 1970 to 2011 with relevance to organizational safety and medication administration in critical care, using the key words: organization, safety, nurse, critical care and medication administration. Archaeological searching, including grey literature and governmental documents, was also carried out. From the identified 766 articles, 51 studies were considered relevant.

Conclusion: The Organizational Safety Space Model offers a productive, conceptual system framework to critically analyse the wider organizational issues, which may influence the safety of medication administration and organizational resilience to accidents. However, the model needs to be evaluated for its application in health care settings in general and critical
care in particular. Nurses would offer a valuable insight in explaining how the Organizational Safety Space Model can be used to analyse the organizational contributions towards medication administration in adult critical care settings.