

METHODS

A review of the published scientific literature was undertaken using OVID Medline from 1966 to December 2007. This database includes “In-Process and Other Non-Indexed Citations”, Ovid’s collection of non-indexed National Library of Medicine records, both the in-process and PubMed-not-MEDLINE records, and OLDMEDLINE (the National Library of Medicine’s online database of approximately 1,700,000 citations to articles from international biomedical journals covering the fields of medicine, preclinical sciences and allied health sciences). The same Medical Subject Headings (MeSH terms) relating to patient safety, primary care and incident reporting (shown in Table 1) were also used to search the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and Excerpta Medica (EMBASE). The reference lists of selected articles were scanned for any additional relevant publications.

We excluded articles that did not report original research, studies that examined only one type of patient safety incident or only one primary care process, and studies based on hospital data only. We included research about patient safety incidents where both primary care and hospital data were used and we included research about community-based complementary or alternative medicine that met other review criteria.

We also searched the internet sites of national patient safety organizations in Australia, Europe and North America and the English-language websites of 92 international, national or provincial general practice or family medicine organizations, and one international and one national physician insurance agency. The search strategy for Medline (repeated for searches of the CINAHL and EMBASE databases) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Search strategy used for OVID Medline

| Search | |
|--------|---|
| #1 | Family practice OR primary care OR primary health care OR general practice |
| #2 | Medical error* OR medication error* OR diagnostic error* OR iatrogenic disease OR malpractice OR safety culture OR near failure OR near miss OR patient safety method* OR patient safety indicator* OR patient safety measure* OR patient safety report* OR safety event report* OR safety manage* OR risk manage* OR adverse drug reaction |
| #3 | #1 AND #2 |
| #4 | LIMIT: Abstracts |
| #5 | LIMIT: English language |
| #6 | LIMIT: clinical trial OR meta-analysis OR randomized controlled trial OR review OR case report OR classical article OR comparative study OR evaluation studies OR controlled clinical trial |