Dear Editor,

Medication errors (MEs) are considered as the most common medical errors causing major challenges which can threaten the health system. If proper actions are taken into account they can be reduced. MEs threaten patients’ safety and may increase the length of hospital stay, lead to unexpected complications, mortality and additional costs (1, 2). In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched ‘Medication without Harm’ to reduce severe avoidable medication-related damage by 50%, globally in the next 5 years (3). Emergency departments (EDs) are stressful care environments characterized by high speed performance, a large number of patients, unpredictability, high workload, availability of various medications and oral instructions, making EDs more prone to MEs. In addition, the critical nature of many emergency patients may lead to MEs. Therefore, EDs need to be seriously considered to reduce MEs and increase patients’ safety. A review of literature on MEs in EDs provides us with important background knowledge which is helpful in future planning. In this regard, it is of great significance to know about the most common stages of error in pharmacotherapy, the most common types of ME and the most common causes of MEs in the emergency department practice setting.

**Stages of the MEs in EDs**

There are five consecutive stages in the pharmacotherapy: 1) prescribing, 2) transcribing, 3) dispensing, 4) administration, and 5) monitoring. Errors may occur in each stage. A review of literature on MEs in EDs (three national and two international studies) shows that the administration and prescribing are the most common stages of error. In the administration and prescribing stages, the error usually occurs by the nurse and by the physician, respectively (4-8). Thus, these two stages should be considered as the main purpose of the future studies and planning. Also, in planning nurses should be given more attention.

**Types of MEs in EDs**

More than 20 types of MEs may occur (Table 1). A review of literature on MEs in EDs (five national and five international studies) shows that the most common types of MEs in EDs include drug omission error, wrong dose and strong infusion rate (4, 5, 8-15). Therefore, focusing, planning and training clinicians on these three types of MEs may greatly reduce the amount of MEs in EDs.

**Causes of the MEs in EDs (in Iran)**

A review of four national studies reveals that, according to the perspective of clinicians, the most common causes of MEs in EDs include nursing shortage (fatigue) and poor medication knowledge (5, 9, 14, 16). Hence, MEs in EDs can be greatly prevented by planning to reduce these two causes. Strategies for employing experienced nurses in EDs, establishing ways for contacting a clinical pharmacist, holding regular retraining courses, improving nurses’ pharmacological knowledge during undergraduate courses, as well as conducting interventional studies to reduce MEs in EDs can be helpful.

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**Received:** 20 April 2021  **Accepted:** 3 June 2021  **Published online:** 17 June 2021

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**Competing interests:** Not declared.

**Funding information:** None.

Authors’ contributions
Authors contributed equally to the work.

Ethical issues
Not applicable.

Acknowledgements
None.

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