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FRAMEWORK FOR PATIENT SAFETY

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1. Background

A medication (a medicinal product) is 'a product that contains a compound with proven biological effects, plus excipients or excipients only; it may also contain contaminants; the active compound is usually a drug or prodrug, but may be a cellular element'. The definition of a medication encompasses not only chemical compounds—drugs, prodrugs (which may themselves have no pharmacological activity), stereoisomers that may have only adverse effects, or compounds that are used for diagnostic purposes (such as contrast media); it also includes cellular elements, such as inactivated or attenuated viruses for immunization, blood products (such as platelets), viruses for gene therapy, and embryonic stem cells; 'contaminants' includes chemical and biological contaminants and adulterants, the former being accidentally present the latter deliberately added. Medication errors can occur in:

- *Choosing a medicine*—irrational, inappropriate, and ineffective prescribing, under-prescribing and overprescribing;
- *Writing the prescription*—prescription errors, including illegibility;
- *Manufacturing the formulation to be used*—wrong strength, contaminants or adulterants, wrong or misleading packaging;
- *Dispensing the formulation*—wrong drug, wrong formulation, wrong label;
- *Administering or taking the drug*—wrong dose, wrong route, wrong frequency, wrong duration;
- *Monitoring therapy*—failing to alter therapy when required, erroneous alteration.