

Medication errors top cause of "adverse" events

Faulty prescribing and incorrect dosages led to the majority of medication errors in America's hospitals and health systems between 1976 and 1997, according to a study published in the August 1, 2001, issue of the *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*.

The article, "Potential Risks and Prevention: Reports of Significant Adverse Drug Events," summarizes more than 1,500 case reports of Adverse Drug Events (ADEs) that occurred over a 21-year period.

Prescribing errors caused 58% of the significant events. The study's author noted that **more than half of the major errors were preventable**. Fifty percent of the preventable errors could have been avoided through increased pharmacist scrutiny of the drug regimens.

Central nervous system drugs, antimicrobials, antineoplastics, and medications to treat cardiovascular conditions were most commonly involved in ADEs. Patients who had adverse drug reactions comprised more than half of all adverse events. Allergic reactions, medication errors, and drug interactions were also cited as major causes.

SOURCE: *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, Aug. 1, 2001.