Reviewer's report

Title: The nature and causes of unintended events reported at ten emergency departments

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Reviewer: Charles Vincent

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This paper reports a study of 522 unintended events reported from 10 emergency departments in the Netherlands. The events are analysed according to a well developed analytic model developed outside industry but increasingly applied in healthcare. As the authors comment, the analysis and learning from such events is a key element of a comprehensive patient safety programme.

The methods of the paper are appropriate to the study, the objectives of the study are clear and the study appears to have been efficiently and carefully carried out. The study builds effectively on previous work in that it is larger and more ambitious in scope, and applies a standard methodology across a large number of events. The paper is well structured, the study well described and illustrated by appropriate tables and exemplars. In summary, this is a well conducted, useful and well written study; however I believe that the findings could be more powerfully presented.

Suggested revisions

The conclusions as stated are very general, largely confined to the fact that causes fall into human, technical and organisational categories and that there is potential for learning from incidents. However, at this point in the evolution of patient safety this hardly needs to be said. I believe though that the implications of the findings and the study methods have not been brought out as fully as they might be and that the authors need to consider the intended audience of the paper; presumably the audience is not just other researchers. Some questions that might be considered include:

- What exactly are the main clinical and organisational lessons that can be drawn from these incidents?
- What interventions do they suggest?
- What implications does this work have for running emergency departments?
- Can this method be taught to clinicians and managers or is it restricted to researchers?
- How can this work be integrated into the work of an emergency department?

I appreciate that the authors are not running emergency departments, but they clearly have close links with such departments. I feel that the paper would be
greatly strengthened and could be very valuable if they could widen their perspective to consider what the full implications and applicability of the findings and methods might be.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'