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## The Voice of Reason: An Analysis of Nurse Related Adverse Events in Australia 2001 – 2013

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This research constituted the first Australian study to use Coronial reports to analyse nurse-related adverse events resulting in the deaths of patients. As nurses represent the largest group in the health care workforce, providing 24-hour care, they are in a key position to contribute to improving patient safety. James Reason's theory of accident prevention, including his Swiss cheese model (1990), provided a conceptual framework for the research and underpinned the Human Factors Analysis and Classification (HFACS) methodology used for the study. HFACS was used to categorize and analyze active and latent failures at each level of the organizations and to understand the interrelationships between these layers of influence that resulted in the deaths. Contributions to original knowledge derived from this research include the evidence that unsafe acts are not single, isolated events but the result of an error trajectory with influencing factors at all levels of an organization; nurse-related errors are generally preventable; communication problems exist from the top layers of organizations down to the frontline; balancing the skill-mix and number of nursing staff matters; and routine violations are preventable. Latent factors contributing to error can be identified and mitigated which can then prevent errors from occurring. The findings from this research provide an evidence base for developing focused policy and other strategies across health provider organizations to improve the safety of patients.

### Biography:

Dr. Melanie Underwood is the Assistant Dean: Learning Futures at Charles Darwin University in Darwin, Northern Territory Australia. Her research program is in patient safety, nursing research and using adverse event analysis frameworks to examine healthcare error.