
The measurement and monitoring of surgical adverse events

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Record Status

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Authors' objectives

The aim of this methodological review was to identify a selection of common and potentially avoidable surgical adverse events and to assess whether they could be reliably and validly measured, to review methods for monitoring their occurrence and to identify examples of effective monitoring systems for selected events. This review is a comprehensive attempt to examine the quality of the definition, measurement, reporting and monitoring of selected events that are known to cause significant postoperative morbidity and mortality.

Authors' conclusions

The use of standardised, valid and reliable definitions is fundamental to the accurate measurement and monitoring of surgical adverse events. This review found inconsistency in the quality of reporting of postoperative adverse events, limiting accurate comparison of rates over time and between institutions. The duration of follow-up for individual events will vary according to their natural history and epidemiology. Although risk-adjusted aggregated rates can act as screening or warning systems for adverse events, attribution of whether events are avoidable or preventable will invariably require further investigation at the level of the individual, unit or department.

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