

The person approach

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Human performance principles tell us that humans are fallible and that errors can occur through doing the wrong thing – errors of commission; failure to act – errors of omission; or errors of execution – doing the right thing incorrectly. These principles also tell us that, by understanding the reasons why adverse events and near misses occur and by applying the lessons learnt from past events, future errors can be prevented. However, for most errors the person approach on its own tends to blame the individual and restricts learning. For this reason, individual performance may be best assessed by professional appraisal processes and clinical audit, which ensures that performance outcomes are benchmarked across institutional, national and international norms.

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