

Editorial: Patient safety

Patient safety is an essential aspect of quality nursing care. In an effort to improve the quality of nursing or health care as a whole, patient safety is becoming increasingly important in many countries.

Nurses are the most represented profession in healthcare and, compared to other healthcare professionals, spend the most time with patients. Therefore, they have a huge potential in ensuring patient safety, in reducing errors and adverse events (The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2019). Scientific studies confirm that nurse assessment of patient safety has been shown to be vital for improving patient safety and the quality of not only nursing but overall healthcare (Kirwan, Matthews, Scott, 2013; Gurková et al., 2019). Of course, safe practice requires both – clinical experience and relevant knowledge. Thus, patient safety must be content-wise integrated into the education and training not only of nurses, but also of physicians and other healthcare professionals (WHO, 2008).

Safe and quality nursing care does not only require erudite approach of nurses, but primarily satisfactory working conditions and staffing. Research shows that organizational safety systems aimed at reporting adverse events, evaluating and developing patient safety culture, and maximizing education in this area have proven to be effective in preventing errors, harm, or the occurrence of adverse events in patients (Pokorná et al., 2016; Mitchel et al., 2016; Gurková et al., 2019). The management of medical facilities focused on safety and quality plays an important role in building these systems. However, the government plays a primary role in this area by proposing systemic solutions, ensuring optimal capacities and creating a legislative framework supporting patient safety.

In recent years, public interest in the quality and safety of healthcare has also increased. One of the ways to improve patient safety is to actively take responsibility for the health and safety of the patients themselves, by increasing health literacy, optimizing their own health care and safe self-management of treatment. The issue of involving patients and patient organizations in assessing the safety and quality of care and providing feedback in this area is also discussed.

A successful example of ensuring patient and public safety can be the current management of the pandemic situation in connection with COVID-19 in Slovakia. Slovakia is one of the countries with the lowest number of deaths per capita. This success is attributed to the timely intervention of the government and the implementation of security measures, the coordinated action of all security forces and other parties involved, the work of healthcare professionals, researchers and the personal responsibility of citizens in complying with security measures.

Patient safety is not just in the hands of specific nurses and healthcare professionals. As evidenced by scientific results and practice, optimal patient safety is first and foremost a product of effective state policy and management of healthcare facilities, as well as the work of healthcare professionals, scientists, educators, all professionals involved and the personal responsibility of individuals.

PhDr. Mária Sováriová Soósová, PhD.
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Nursing Care

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