



## Review

# Patient participation in nursing care on medical wards: An integrative review



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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Patient participation is a way for patients to engage in their nursing care. In view of the possible link between patient participation and safety, there is a need for an updated review to assess patient participation in nursing care.

**Objectives:** To investigate patients' and nurses' perceptions of and behaviours towards patient participation in nursing care in the context of hospital medical wards.

**Design:** Integrative review.

**Data sources:** Three search strategies were employed in August 2013; a computerised database search of Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature, Cochrane Library, Medline and PsychINFO; reference lists were hand-searched; and forward citation searching was executed.

**Review methods:** After reviewing the studies, extracting study data and completing summary tables the methodological quality was assessed using the Mixed-Methods Assessment Tool by two reviewers. Reviewers met then to discuss discrepancies as well as the overall strengths and limitations of the studies. Discrepancies were overcome through consensus or a third reviewer adjudicated the issue. Within and across study analysis and synthesis of the findings sections was undertaken using thematic synthesis.

**Results:** Eight studies met inclusion criteria. Four themes were identified – enacting participation, challenges to participation, promoting participation and types of participation. Most studies included were conducted in Europe. The majority of studies used qualitative methodologies, with all studies sampling patients; nurses were included in three studies. Data were largely collected using self-reported perceptions; two studies included observational data. Methodological issues included a lack of reflexivity, unvalidated data collection tools, sampling issues and low response rates.

**Conclusions:** On medical wards, patients and nurses desire, perceive or enact patient participation passively. Challenging factors for patient participation include patients' willingness, nurses' approach and confusion around expectations and roles. Information-sharing was identified as an activity that promotes patient participation, suggesting

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nurses encourage active communication with patients in practice. Involving patients in assessment and care planning may also enhance patient participation. For education, enhancing nurses' understanding of the attributes of patient participation, as well as patient-centred care approaches may be beneficial for medical ward nurses. From here, researchers need to examine ways to overcome the barriers to patient participation; further nurse participants and observational data is required on medical wards.

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### What is already known about the topic

- Patient participation is advocated as a way to improve safety in hospitals.
- Patient participation allows patients to be involved in a range of nursing care, which may benefit the patient.
- Previous reviews have focused on patient participation in patient safety and do not focus explicitly on patient participation in nursing care.

### What this paper adds

- Patient participation in nursing care on medical wards is not easily achieved.
- Patients and nurses face many challenges when enacting patient participation including patient willingness, nurse approach and unclear expectations and roles.
- Information-sharing activities may promote active patient participation on medical wards.

## 1. Introduction

Hospitals may not be the safest place with approximately 1 in 10 patients experiencing an adverse event (de Vries et al., 2008). In 2014, a Canadian study found 1 in 7 patients hospitalised on medical wards had an adverse event (D'Amour et al., 2014). Internationally, patient-centred care is advocated as an approach to reduce adverse events in hospitals (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), 2011), with governing bodies such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2012), American Hospital Association (AHA) (2014) and ACSQHC (2014) developing resources to enhance practices of patient-centred care in hospitals. Patient participation is a key concept of patient-centred care (Kitson et al., 2013) and has been suggested as a way for patients to ensure safety, owing to their prominence in their own care (Koutantji et al., 2005).

## 2. Background

Patient participation is a diverse term encompassing a large range of activities. The various terminology used synonymously with participation included engagement, involvement (Gallivan et al., 2012), collaboration, and cooperation while patients are described as clients, consumers and users (Langton et al., 2003). The activity 'decision-making' has been promoted as a way for patients to be involved in healthcare, which reflects patients' rights (Entwistle, 2000). However, nursing activities that

patients may engage in are diverse, including handover (Chaboyer et al., 2008), medication rounds (Bolster and Manias, 2010), nursing care planning (Kolovos et al., 2014) and managing own care (Sørensen et al., 2013).

The definition of patient participation lacks consensus (Longtin et al., 2010). Recent definitions of patient participation highlight nurses' requirement to enact patient-centred qualities such as respect and empowerment, and to involve patients in all elements of their care (University of Gothenburg Centre for Person-centred Care (GPCC), 2014). For example, Sahlsten et al.'s (2008) concept analysis provides insights into the phenomenon of patient participation. Although the concepts are tentative, Sahlsten et al.'s (2008) analysis incorporates various researchers' attempts to provide clarity around 'patient participation'. With features of the concept recognisable in recent research (Eldh et al., 2010; Soleimani et al., 2010), this definition seems appropriate and this review may contribute to maturity of the concept. According to Sahlsten et al. (2008), patient participation in nursing care is characterised by four defining attributes including a strong existing nurse–patient relationship, relinquishing of power by nurses, mutual exchange of information and knowledge between patient and nurse, and collaboration in intellectual and/or physical activities; this latter attribute being dependent on the presence of the first three.

Research to date shows apparent benefits for patients who participate in their care. Patient participation in enhancing safety practices in hospital is a convincing concept (Coulter and Ellins, 2007; Longtin et al., 2010), especially when patients self-manage medications (Hall et al., 2010). One recent US study found the risk of experiencing an adverse event was half as likely, when patient participation was implemented (Weingart et al., 2011). However further evidence of the effectiveness of patient participation in safety activities is required (Berger et al., 2013; Schwappach, 2010).

Patient participation also benefits the patient in other ways including enhancing patient knowledge (Coulter and Ellins, 2007) and sense of control (Dudas et al., 2013; Höglund et al., 2010). Patient-centred approaches, inclusive of patient participation, also improve patient satisfaction (Dwamena et al., 2012) and perceived quality of care (Slatore, 2010; Weingart et al., 2011). Finally, involving patients in their care can improve condition (Coulter and Ellins, 2007), specifically patients' function in activities of daily living (Ekman et al., 2012). The potential positive outcomes of patient participation suggest encouraging patient participation in nursing care, may benefit the patient.

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