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SPECIAL ARTICLE

Nursing involvement in risk and patient safety management in Primary Care☆

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Abstract Patient safety and quality of care in a highly complex healthcare system depends not only on the actions of professionals at an individual level, but also on interaction with the environment. Proactive risk management in the system to prevent incidents and activities targeting healthcare teams is crucial in establishing a culture of safety in centres. Nurses commonly lead these safety strategies.

Even though safety incidents are relatively infrequent in primary care, since the majority are preventable, actions at this level of care are highly effective. Certification of services according to ISO standard 9001:2008 focuses on risk management in the system and its use in certifying healthcare centres is helping to build a safety culture amongst professionals.

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Implicación de las enfermeras en la gestión de riesgos y la seguridad del paciente en Atención Primaria

Resumen En un sistema sanitario de alta complejidad, la seguridad del paciente y la calidad de la asistencia no solo dependen de las actuaciones de los profesionales a nivel individual, sino también de la interacción de estos con el entorno. La gestión de riesgos del sistema, por su carácter proactivo en la prevención de incidentes y las actuaciones dirigidas al equipo de

profesionales, se presenta como clave para establecer una cultura de seguridad en los centros. Habitualmente son los enfermeros los que lideran estas estrategias de seguridad.

A pesar de que la frecuencia de incidentes de seguridad en la Atención Primaria no es muy elevada, al ser en su mayoría prevenibles, las actuaciones en este nivel asistencial son muy efectivas. La certificación de servicios según la norma ISO 9001:2008 está enfocada a la gestión de riesgos del sistema y su utilización para la certificación de los centros de salud está ayudando a crear una cultura de seguridad entre los profesionales.

Introduction

The complexity of healthcare and the fact that different professionals in different environments participate in it results in system-based risk management being a key point for patient safety.[1]

Risk management systems were initially developed in the United States in the 60s and aimed at introducing a more anticipative culture to reduce costs from clinical risks[2] Following the publication of the report ''to err is human'' and subsequent actions of the World Health Organisation[3] with its resolution in 2002 for improvement in quality and safety of care, and the posterior World Alliance for patient Safety in 2004, the focus of risk management began to be directed at patient safety.

Individual-centred risk management considers that it is the professionals who are individually responsible for errors. However, a system-based risk management draws from the fact that errors are possible and that they depend on interaction between several factors inherent to the structure and functioning of the institutions. These errors may be foreseen through the establishment of thresholds and by analysing their mistakes.[4]

Thresholds may be impaired due to the actual design of the organisation, to equipment, certain environmental features, lack of leadership and insufficient training. All of these are more important than human errors.[5] Working conditions such as stress, pressure from work, burnout and patient and family demands are also related to the possibility of committing healthcare errors.[6,7]

To foster a culture of patient safety in institutions, with a focus on risk management, it is essential not only to recognise these factors but also to establish relationships between individuals regarding the work entailed and the institution.[8] Organisations therefore need to design strategic plans, aimed at the prevention of adverse events and the improvement in quality along with reductions in care costs.[9]

Teamwork plays a major role in the quality and safety of patient care, and a positive perception of this effects the well-being of the professionals which, in turn, fosters safe health and good quality healthcare.[10] Participation from nursing professionals in care management is also related to a reduction in care risks.[11]

The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, in its Patient Safety Strategy for the 2015–2020 period, has established risk management among its strategies, promoting a proactive approach to identify the possible triggers through analysis of processes and development of prevention mechanisms.[12]

The frequency of adverse events among primary care patients, according to data from the APEAS study, is not very high, and is calculated to be 18.6%. However, if these data are extrapolated to the general population, the probability of suffering from an adverse effect derived from care is up to 7% annually.[13] If we add to this that the majority of events are preventable, introducing primary care risk management strategies are highly effective and become a priority.

The aim of this paper is to present the certification system of quality based on ISO 9001:2008 standard which was introduced into the primary care areas in the Aragonese health Service, and to determine the role of nursing in the creation of a safety and quality culture at this care level.

Standard for quality and safety certification

Certification and excellence models are models of continuous improvements for managing healthcare quality.

In Spain, the most widespread standard is ISO 9001 (International Organization for Standardization), which is based on 8 principles:[14,15]

- Client-focused organisation.
- Leadership.
- Staff participation.
- Process-focused.
- Focus towards system management.
- Continuous improvement.
- Taking decisions based on objective data.
- Good relationship with suppliers.

Once the health organisation obtains accreditation, it is submitted to annual audits to review compliance with corrective actions.[16]