

PATIENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE OBSERVANCE OF THEIR RIGHTS BY NURSES

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Abstract

Introduction and Aim:

Observance of the patient's rights is the legal duty of all the employees of a medical-services-rendering entity, in particular doctors and nurses. It also constitutes a crucial factor affecting the quality of health care. The aim of the study was to attempt to assess the satisfaction of patients with the level of observance of the patient's rights by nurses working at the Polyclinic of the Central Teaching Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Material and Methods:

110 patients (65 women and 45 men; mean age: 55yrs, min. 16, max. 95) of the Polyclinic of the Central Teaching Hospital of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. Education: medium-level – 50, higher – 31, vocational – 23, basic – 6 patients. Professionally active people – 49, pensioners (disability/old-age) – 44. Mean duration of making use of medical services – 16 yrs (min. 1 yr, max. 60 yrs). Voluntary and anonymous questionnaire survey, from January to March 2013, own questionnaire, 17 questions. Descriptive statistics.

Results:

75% of the respondents declared that nurses at the Polyclinic of the Central Teaching Hospital of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs respect the patient's rights. 95 of the respondents declared that nurses inform patients about nursing procedures performed, ask for consent to nursing procedures (81 respondents), respect the patient's right to confidentiality (79 respondents) and respect the patient's intimacy during the performance of nursing procedures (102 respondents). Only 49 patients declared that nurses inform patients about the possibility of their getting acquainted with the Charter of the Patient's Rights.

Conclusions:

1. In the study group, the patients were satisfied with the level of observance of their rights by nurses.
2. Given the pilot character of the study, the research should be continued on a larger and more differentiated group of patients. The results of the study can, however, be of practical value and have a crucial impact on the functioning of the unit.

Keywords: patient's rights, nursing staff, polyclinic.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rights of the patient constitute a particular type of human rights. They are of universal character – being due to anybody who appeals for assistance to a health care unit, irrespective of the race, nationality, religion, sex, sexual orientation or having valid social insurance. The patient's rights are subjective in character which means that every right on the part of the patient has a corresponding duty on the part of the doctor, the nurse, the midwife or any other health care sector employee [1].

The patient's rights which are provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland [2] and are partly specified in it, e.g. in Articles 41 or 68, are regulated in detail in the Act on the rights of the patient and the spokesman for the patient's rights [3]. What should be referred to in their detailed interpretation are, however, other legal acts such as the Act on the profession of the doctor and the

dentist [4] as well as the Act on the profession of the nurse and the midwife. The rights of the patient include, among others, the right to health care, the right to information about the health status, diagnosis, possible methods of treatment, possible consequences of their application or non-application and prognosis, the right to an informed consent to any medical intervention, the right to privacy and intimacy or the right to pastoral care [3].

The role of the nurse, in spite of its evolution, is based and will be based on direct contact with the patient – closer and more frequent than that with the doctor. That is why it is so important for the nurse to know and respect the rights of every patient as well as to inform the patient of their rights [6]. Violation of this duty may imply both professional and legal liability, including penal, employee and civil liability, the latter being of particular importance due to its financial consequences. On the other hand, adequate respect for the patient and the patient's rights due to the latter on the part of the medical staff has a positive influence on the quality of medical services rendered and patients' satisfaction [7].

2 THE AIM OF STUDY

The aim of the study is to try to assess patients' satisfaction with the level of the observance of the patient's rights by nurses working at the Polyclinic of the Central Teaching Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

3 MATERIAL

The study covered 110 patients making use of the services of the Polyclinic of the Central Teaching Hospital of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw in the period from January to March 2013. The study group included 65 women and 45 men; mean age: 55yrs (min. 16, max. 95). Among the respondents 11 were still learning, 49 were professionally active, 44 were pensioners and 6 unemployed. 6 patients had basic education, 50 - medium-level, 31 –higher. The respondents have been making use of medical services of the unit referred to for 1 to 60 years (mean: 16 yrs).

4 METHODS

The study was of a voluntary and anonymous character. The research tool was our own questionnaire consisting of 17 questions, including 5 personal ones. The results were analysed with the help of descriptive statistics with StatSoftStatistica 12.5 (License of Medical University of Warsaw).

5 RESULTS

The respondents' assessment of nurses' work is positive. A prevailing majority of them assess them as polite, caring, smiling, friendly and protective as well as of high personal culture. A significant part of patients find them worth of trust. Detailed results (in absolute figures) in this respect can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Assessment of the attitude of nurses to patients.

	very poor	poor	moderate	good	very good
polite	1	1	13	50	45
friendly	1	1	11	48	49
trustworthy	1	1	29	42	37
Caring	1	1	12	53	43
smiling	1	1	11	50	47
protective	1	2	12	54	41
cultured	1	1	16	48	44

Patients were also asked whether nurses respect specific patient's rights while providing medical services. Almost all patients confirmed the observance of the right to privacy. A prevailing majority of respondents also found that their rights to information and informed consent to the services rendered were respected. Less than half of the respondents confirmed that nurses informed them about the

Charter of the Patient's Rights. Detailed results in this area (in absolute figures) can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Observance of the patient's rights by nurses.

	yes	no	I don't know
Do nurses inform patients about nursing procedures?	95	3	12
Do nurses ask patients for consent to nursing procedures?	81	12	17
Do nurses keep the information passed in confidence?	79	0	41
Do nurses respect the patient's privacy during the procedures performer?	102	2	6
Do nurses provide information about the Charter of the Patient's Rights?	49	15	45

Another research subject explored was the already mentioned Charter of the Patient's Rights. The majority of patients are aware of its existence, however, only every third one is convinced that it has been placed on sight in the unit. A prevailing majority of the respondents knows of the institution of the spokesman for the patient's rights as well as of the object of the latter's activity. Detailed results in this area (in absolute figures) can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Knowledge of the Charter of the Patient's Rights and the spokesman for the patient's rights.

	yes	rather yes	rather not	no	I have no opinion
Have you heard about the Charter of the Patient's Rights?	51	34	9	6	10
Is the Charter of the Patient's Rights placed on sight in the unit?	32	20	7	7	44
Do you know who the spokesman for the patient's rights is?	52	32	19	0	9
Do you know what the spokesman for the patient's rights deals with?	53	35	7	4	11

At the end of the questionnaire the respondents were asked a general question whether the patient's rights are, in their opinion, respected in this health care unit. 39 patients gave a positive answer to this question and 45 answered - rather yes. Only one person was of an opposite opinion. 25 respondents had no opinion in this respect.

6 DISCUSSION

Both Polish and world scientific literature offer numerous studies dealing with the patients' satisfaction with the level of observance of the patient's rights by nurses [7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

In this study, the attitude of nurses to patients was also assessed as good or very good. A prevailing majority of the respondents found this personnel category polite, protective, friendly, caring and cultured. This testified to the good quality of the services rendered which is inseparably linked to the observance of the patient's rights. The right to good medical and nursing care results in the medical staff's duty to adopt a pertinent attitude. In the pilot study by Jończyk, the majority of patients found nurses' attitude to patients good (18 out of 30 opinions). The same number of respondents found nurses trustworthy which is consistent with the result obtained in this respect in our study [7]. According to Moczydłowska et al. , this latter feature is *nomen omen* the most desired feature of medical personnel in the opinion of patients (76% of the answers) [8].

A prevailing majority of the patients studied assessed as positive the observance by nurses of the patient's rights to information, to give an informed consent and to confidentiality. Also the observance of the right to privacy was assessed as very good. This is evidence of the patients' satisfaction with

the respect for their rights. However, without examining the actual knowledge of the essence of individual rights by patients, we cannot state with certainty that they are respected by the nursing staff. A preliminary study by Gotlib et al. revealed that the knowledge of the patient's rights by nurses is debatable. Only 41% of respondents assessed their knowledge in this respect as good or very good [9]. This situation creates the need and opens the way for further, more comprehensive research.

The patients declare knowledge of the Charter of the Patient's Rights and the Spokesman for the Patient's Rights and his activity but only half of the respondents confirmed the presence of the Charter of the Patient's Rights in a visible place in the outpatient clinic. This is consistent with the results obtained in reply to the question whether nurses inform patients about their rights. Also in this case, every second patient gave a positive answer. These results are not satisfactory if only against the study by Jończyk in which the majority of respondents admitted having had an opportunity to get acquainted with the Charter of the Patient's Rights and having access to all and any information with respect to their rights [7].

In general, observance of the patient's rights was assessed as good or very good by three out of four respondents. These results can be compared with the internal study at Public Teaching Hospital No.1 in Wrocław conducted in 2014. 98% of the 610 questionnaires returned by respondents revealed positive assessment of the observance of the patient's rights in the hospital [10]. It should, however, be kept in mind that our own study was conducted in an outpatient setting which can affect the comparability of the results. On the other hand, as revealed by the study of Grabska and Stefańska, only 22% of patients expect a nurse to respect their rights [11].

7 CONCLUSIONS

1. In the study group, the patients were satisfied with the level of observance of their rights by nurses. What arouses doubts is the poor provision of patients with information about their rights.
2. Given the pilot character of the study, the research should be continued on a larger and more differentiated group of patients. The results of the study can, however, be of practical value and show the directions in which works on the improvement of the quality of medical services rendered should proceed.

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