

THE ATTEMPT TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHARTER OF THE PATIENT'S RIGHTS AMONG PATIENTS OF THE NOWODWORSKIE MEDICAL CENTRE

WIEDZA PACJENTÓW NA TEMAT KARTY PRAW PACJENTA WŚRÓD PACJENTÓW NOWODWORSKIEGO CENTRUM MEDYCZNEGO

Aleksander Zarzeka^{1,2}, Mariola Sajkowicz³, Mariusz Panczyk¹, Jarosława Belowska¹, Łukasz Samoliński^{1,2}, Joanna Gotlib¹

¹ Division of Teaching and Outcomes of Education, Faculty of Health Science, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland

² Students' Research Group in Medical Law, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland

³ Faculty of Health Science, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland

ABSTRACT

Introduction. The patient's rights, belonging to the category of human rights, are subject to legal protection on the national as well as international level. Given the insufficient observance of the patient's rights (PRs) reported, the Charter of the Patient's Rights (ChPR) was drawn up.

Aim. The aim of the study was to assess the level of knowledge of the Charter of Patient's Rights among patients.

Material and methods. 112 patients of the Nowodworskie Medical Center: 78 (69%) women and 34 (31%) men, aged: 18–35 yrs – 23%, 36–50 yrs – 25%, 51–70 yrs – 45%, over 71 yrs – 7%, were surveyed. The educational status of respondents: medium-level – 48%, vocational – 22%, higher – 21%, basic – 9%. 76 (67%) of respondents lived in rural areas, 38 (33%) in urban areas. A voluntary questionnaire survey, anonymous, own questionnaire, 12 closed questions were used in the study. Descriptive statistics were performed.

Results. Approximately, a half (48%) of the respondents declared knowledge of patient's rights. The sources of patient's rights-related education most frequently indicated by patients included: media (26–39%), the Charter of Patient's Rights – 27%, health-care workers – 3–12%. Less than a half of the respondents assessed their knowledge of the Charter of Patient's Rights as satisfactory (44%), good (34%), very good (2%). 20% of the respondents declared lack of patient's rights knowledge.

Conclusions. 1. In the study group, the knowledge of the patient's rights was inadequate. Patients of the Nowodworskie Medical Centre should, therefore, be better and to a greater extent provided by health-care workers with information about their rights as patients.

2. In the study group of patients, the knowledge of the Charter of the Patient's Rights was an insufficient source of knowledge of the patient's rights. The document could be considered as not adequate a source of knowledge concerning patient's rights.

3. Given the pilot character of this report, research should be continued on a more representative group of patients

KEYWORDS: patient's rights, sources of knowledge, patients, The Charter of Patient's Rights.

STRESZCZENIE

Wstęp. Prawa pacjenta należą do kategorii praw człowieka, których ochrona zagwarantowana jest zarówno na poziomie krajowym, jak i międzynarodowym. Z powodu niedostatecznej znajomości praw pacjentów przez samych zainteresowanych stworzono Kartę Praw Pacjenta.

Cel. Celem pracy jest próba oceny znajomości Karty Praw Pacjenta wśród pacjentów.

Materiał i metody. 112 pacjentów Nowodworskiego Centrum Medycznego 78 (69%) kobiet i 34 (31%) mężczyzn, Wiek: 18–35 lat – 23%, 36–50 lat – 25%, 51–70 lat – 45%, ponad 71 lat – 7%. Wykształcenie: średnie – 48%, zawodowe – 22%, wyższe – 21%, podstawowe – 9%. 76 respondentów (67%) zamieszkiwało tereny wiejskie, zaś 38 (33%) miasta. Dobrowolny i anonimowy autorski kwestionariusz zawierał 12 pytań. Przeprowadzono opisową analizę statystyczną.

Wyniki. Około połowa respondentów zadeklarowała znajomość praw pacjenta. Najczęściej wskazywanym źródłem wiedzy na temat pacjenta były media (26–39%), dalej Karta Praw Pacjenta – 27%, pracownicy ochrony zdrowia – 3–12%. Poziom znajomości karty praw pacjenta respondenci najczęściej oceniają u siebie jako zadowalający (44%). Dobrze swoją wiedzę w tym zakresie ocenia 34%, a bardzo dobrze 2%. Co piąty pytany nie zna Karty Praw Pacjenta.

Wnioski. 1. W badanej grupie wiedza na temat praw pacjenta była niesatysfakcjonująca. Pacjenci powinni więc być lepiej informowani o swoich prawach, szczególnie przez pracowników ochrony zdrowia, co należy do ich obowiązków.

2. W badanej grupie znajomość Karty Praw Pacjenta wśród samych zainteresowanych była niesatysfakcjonująca. Dokument ten może nie być dla pacjentów dogodnym źródłem wiedzy w tym zakresie.

3. Z uwagi na pilotażowy charakter pracy, badania powinny być kontynuowane w szerszej i bardziej reprezentatywnej grupie pacjentów.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: prawa pacjenta, źródła wiedzy, pacjenci, Karta Praw Pacjenta.

Introduction

Patient's rights belong to the category of human rights. These are rights which apply to patients in relation with health care. The patient as a person who suffers and asks for professional care is considered a weaker partner in relation with a physician, nurse or midwife. This state comes primarily from so called 'information asymmetry' between the parties [1, 2]. Health is one of the most private zones of life. At the same time, someone (a doctor or nurse) knows more about it than the most interested person – the patient. Moreover, the state of patient health very often depends on the healthcare worker. Therefore, the institution of patient's rights has been introduced in majority of democratic countries.

From the legal point of view, patient's rights in Poland are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland [3] as well as the law on patient's rights and advocate of patient's rights from 2008 [4].

In Poland the term 'patient's rights' is quite new, particularly in case of older patients. Awareness regarding these rights among patients is unsatisfactory, which risks abuse on the side of health care professions. Patient's rights are guaranteed by laws, but ordinary people do not read them, do not understand the legal language, or even do not know where to find this information.

To increase awareness of patient's rights, the Charter of Patient's Rights has been created. It is important to point, that the charter is not a legal act, but an informational document, where all important facts concerning patient's rights have been shared. It contains and describes all patient rights in an accessible form.

From among these rights, at least a few, the most significant ones should be indicated and briefly described. The first and the most important one is the right to health care. No one from among health care professionals can refuse the patient help, when he or she needs it. The patient can expect care, which is adequate to the present state of medical knowledge and possibilities of the provider. Moreover, the patient has the right to give an informed consent for every procedure. It is connected with the right to information about the state of health, suggested and possible methods of treatment, predicted effects of applying or not applying the method and also about possible complications.

As it was mentioned above, the Charter of Patient's Rights was introduced to give the patient clear information, what he or she can expect and demand from health care providers. To assess if this tool is effective, authors decided to conduct the study.

Aim

The aim of the study was to assess the level of knowledge of the Charter of Patient's Rights among patients.

Material and methods

The study has been conducted among patients of the Nowodworskie Medical Center between 2nd February and 10th March 2013. The research involved 140 of them. Finally, in the study took part 112 patients (respond rate = 80%). 78 (69%) of respondents were women and 34 (31%) men. They were divided with respect to the age, education level, and place of residence. Detailed demographic data have been presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographic data of respondents

Feature	Category	Respondents
Gender	Female	70%
	Male	30%
Age	18–35 years	23%
	36–50 years	25%
	51–70 years	45%
	71 years and more	7%
Education	Basic	9%
	Vocational	22%
	Medium-level	48%
	Higher	21%
Place of residence	Urban area	29%
	Rural area	71%

Source: authors' study

The participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The survey with the authors' own questionnaire contained 12 closed questions. Authors performed statistical analysis using STATISTICA 10.0 (Medical University of Warsaw licence).

Results

Most patients heard about the patient's rights. Fewer than 1/5 of respondents did not hear about this kind of rights. Detailed results have been presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. General knowledge about patient's rights

Q1. Have you ever heard about patient's rights? (N=112)	
Yes	27%
Rather yes	50%
I do not remember	5%
Rather not	8%
Not	10%

Source: authors' study

Media are the main source of knowledge about patient's rights. The majority of respondents know about them from TV, radio, or magazines/journals. Quite an

important source of knowledge is also the Charter of Patient's Rights. Only small part of respondents got to know about the patient's rights from healthcare workers (i.e. physician or nurse). Detailed results have been presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Sources of knowledge about the patient's rights

Q2. How do you know about patient's rights? (N=112)	
From magazines/journals	30%
From the Chapter of Patient's Rights	27%
From friends or family members	18%
From the radio of TV	39%
From the Internet	26%
From books	1%
From the pharmacist	3%
From the physician	11%
From the nurse	6%
From the physiotherapist	2%
From other source	1%
I do not remember	6%

Source: authors' study

Almost a half of respondents claim, that they know their rights as patients. A similar group admit, that they do not know this sort of rights. Detailed results have been presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Awareness of patient's rights in the research group

Q3. Do you know your rights as a patient? (N=112)	
Yes	15%
Rather yes	33%
I do not know/hard to tell	8%
Rather not	19%
Not	25%

Source: authors' study

Only 30% of respondents have been informed about their rights during their treatment process in the medical center. The vast majority of the research group did not receive any information in this area or do not remember about it. Detailed results have been presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Information provided by the medical center

Q4. Have you been informed about your rights in the medical center? (N=112)	
Yes	18%
Rather yes	13%
I do not know/hard to tell	9%
Rather not	27%
Not	33%

Source: authors' study

The vast majority of respondents admit, that they do not know the Charter of Patient's Rights well. From the other side, only 8% of them do not know the Charter at all. Detailed results have been presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Self-assessment of knowledge of the Charter of Patient's Rights

Q5. How do you perceive your knowledge of the Charter of Patient's Rights? (N=112)	
Very good	2%
Good	34%
Satisfactory	44%
Unsatisfactory	12%
I do not it know at all	8%

Source: authors' study

Discussion

In the current state, the patient is a subject of health care, not an object as it used to be in the past. Therefore, the issue of patient's rights can be considered an important area of the medical law. There are a lot of legal papers and monographies concerning patient's rights in the Polish legal system [1, 2]. Moreover, the issue of patients' knowledge about patient's rights has been given much attention in Polish and world literature [5, 6, 7, 8].

Authors' own research showed that patients had general knowledge about the patient's rights. The term of patient's rights is known by them. Conversely, fewer than half of respondents know their rights as patients. These results are similar to other research. Wagner in 2008 conducted the study for The Institute of Patient's Rights and Health Education. In her research there was a significant difference between awareness of patient's rights existence (50%) and any knowledge about the rights' meaning [5]. In the study prepared by Iwanowicz-Palusz [6] the same conclusions were presented. 64% of respondents in this research heard about patient's rights, but only 31% knew the meaning of particular rights.

The Charter of Patient's Rights has been prepared to increase public awareness of patient's rights. It is an informational document where all important rights of patients are presented and briefly described. Nevertheless, authors' own research showed that only 27% of patients learned about their rights from the Charter. Most of them preferred TV, Internet, radio or press. These results cannot be considered a surprise. Gotlib and co-workers, who assessed knowledge of medical staff about patient's rights, found out that only 37% of nurses and physicians got to know the contents of the

Charter of Patient's Rights [7]. In this situation we cannot expect deeper knowledge from patients.

It is important to indicate certain limitations of the study. The research group is not extensive. Moreover, the sampling is not random, thus the results cannot be representative for all Polish patients. There is a need to continue and deepen the study in a wider group of patients.

Conclusions

1. In the study group, the knowledge of the patient's rights was inadequate. Patients of the Nowodworskie Medical Centre should therefore be better and to a greater extent provided by health-care workers with information about their rights as patients.
2. In the study group of patients, the knowledge of the Charter of the Patient's Rights was an insufficient source of knowledge of the patient's rights. The document could be considered as not adequate a source of knowledge concerning patient's rights.
3. Given the pilot character of this report, research should be continued on a more representative group of patients

References

1. Boratyńska M. Wolny wybór. Gwarancje i granice prawa pacjenta do samodecydowania, Warszawa 2013.
2. Karkowska D. Prawa pacjenta. Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer; 2009.
3. The Constitution of Republic of Poland of 2nd April 1997.
4. Law on patient rights and advocate of patient rights of 6th November 2008.
5. Wagner O. Report of Institute of Patient Rights and Health Education, Warsaw 2008/09.
6. Iwanowicz-Palusz GJ. Znajomość praw pacjenta, *Zdrowie Publiczne* 2002; (3): 320–325.
7. Gotlib J, Dykowska G, Sienkiewicz Z, Skanderowicz E. Ocena wiedzy i postaw personelu medycznego Samodzielnego Publicznego Szpitala Klinicznego im. Prof. Orłowskiego w Warszawie wobec praw pacjenta, *Annales Academiae Medicae Silesienis* 2014; 68 (2): 84–93.
8. Ozdemir HM, Can O, Ergonen AT i wsp. Midwives and nurses awareness of patients' rights, *Midwifery* 2009; 25: 756–765.

The manuscript accepted for editing:

The manuscript accepted for publication:

Funding Sources: This study was not supported.

Conflict of interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Address for correspondence:

Aleksander Zarzeka
Żwirki i Wigury 81
02-091 Warsaw, Poland
phone: +48 691 646 174
e-mail: aleksander.zarzeka@wum.edu.pl
Division of Teaching and Outcomes of Education
Medical University of Warsaw