Collection and Sharing of Information on Patient Safety Education and Training in Europe

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Abstract. The European Union Network for Patient Safety (EUNetPaS) is a project funded and supported by the European Commission within the 2007 Public Health Programme and aims to encourage and enhance the collaboration of participating EU countries in the field of Patient Safety. One of its major objectives is to promote Patient Safety (PS) education and training in Member States, through building a platform for mutual exchange of experience and knowledge on methods of planning and implementing sustainable learning activities. Towards this direction, a methodology has been applied, based on a three axes schema, which describes the roles, the awareness level and the competences of the PS Education and Training Activities. Based on this scheme, a questionnaire has been developed and distributed across EU organizations through National Contact Points, as a tool for information collection. Looking to the above structure, a web-based resource has been developed aiming to facilitate the information collection and sharing, in a truly networking environment.

Keywords. patient safety, education, training, information, data collection

1. Introduction

Healthcare is a complex, high-risk activity, which is not as safe as it should be, and in many cases may lead to errors during everyday practice. Adverse events and medical errors are relevant causes of harm, injury or even death to patients [1]. Adverse events occur in all health care settings: hospitals, clinics, healthcare centres, nursing homes, urgent care, and surgery centers. It has been estimated that around 10–16% of hospitalized patients experience an adverse event related to clinical care, with a mortality rate in these patients of 5–8% [2]. Safety of healthcare services is valued highly by EU citizens. According to the Eurobarometer survey published in 2006 [3] almost four out of five EU citizens (78%) consider medical errors as an important issue in their country. Patient Safety (PS) is a major concern in Europe. The UK Department of Health, in its 2000 report, estimated that adverse events occur in around 10% of hospitals admissions or about 850,000 adverse events a year [4]. A report by the

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Hospitals for Europe’s Working Party on Quality Care in Hospitals (HOPE) has also estimated that every tenth patient in hospitals in Europe suffers from preventable harm and adverse effects related to his/her care [5]. It is estimated that a substantial proportion of the adverse events which take place in healthcare settings in the EU are preventable and effective interventions can be made to reduce the effect of morbidity and mortality. However, it is difficult to obtain exact numbers because only a few member states have made in-depth studies on this. Nevertheless, it is evident that similar types of medical errors happen in all healthcare systems in spite of the differences in the way they are organized or financed [6]. Patient Safety is defined as the “freedom for a patient from unnecessary harm or potential harm associated with healthcare”. It is a serious concern in the EU [7]. PS is simply defined as “the prevention of harm to patients” [8]. It is an integral part of the delivery of quality of care and a fundamental right. Although simple in definition, the road to ensuring PS in healthcare facilities is complex and replete with obstacles. Health care organizations should make PS a declared and serious aim by establishing comprehensive programs with defined executive responsibility, operated by trained personnel and in a culture of safety [9].

2. The EU Network for Patient Safety (EUNetPaS) Project

The European Union Network for Patient Safety (EUNetPaS) is a project funded and supported by the European Commission within the 2007 Public Health Programme [10]. It started on 1st February 2008 and it has a 30-month duration. This project is coordinated by HAS (French National Authority for Health), and unites representatives of the European medical community (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, managers of healthcare organizations, patients’ associations, etc.) and the institutional partners involved in PS with the states of the EU (members of national PS organizations and Member States’ Ministries of Health). EUNetPaS purposes to establish an umbrella network of all 27 EU Member States to encourage and enhance their collaboration in the field of PS (culture, reporting and learning systems, declaration of adverse events, education and monitoring PS), thus maximizing efficiency of efforts at EU level.

EUNetPaS focuses on the following topic areas:

1. Promoting a Culture of PS. National representatives and experts will play a key role in the collection and exchange of information concerning PS.
2. Structuring Education and Training in PS in Member States through mutual exchange of experience and knowledge on learning interventions for healthcare professionals and involvement of patients and caregivers.
3. Proposal of a Core European curriculum for PS in higher education and as part of continuing education taking into account patients and health care professionals needs.
4. Implementing Reporting and Learning Systems for the identification, collection and structuring of Patient Safety information within the EU, providing Member States with a database of solutions to related issues which they can draw upon.
5. Pilot Implementation of Medication Safety to improve medication safety in hospitals by identifying good practices, translating them into tools and testing these tools in selected hospitals.
3. EUNetPaS Education and Training Scope

One of the major objectives of the EUNetPaS project is to promote PS education and training in Member States that are inspired by common principles and values. This scope will be succeeded through building a platform for the mutual exchange of experience and knowledge on methods of planning and implementing sustainable learning activities for healthcare professionals and of involving patients and caregivers -through awareness and education programmes. A secondary scope refers to reaching out to workforce planners that reside in healthcare organizations as well as decision makers in Higher Education at national and EU level to promote the integration of these learning methods and learning activities in undergraduate and postgraduate medical and nursing curricula. PS education activities in EUNetPaS are considered as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for health care professionals, as actions aiming at patient empowerment as well as part of higher education programmes.

Towards the achievement of these goals, a common platform for the exchange of knowledge on Patient Safety Education and Training Activities is expected to reinforce the process of information collection and sharing in Europe. The outcomes of these Network activities shall add value to national work by exploiting the Network’s consolidated knowledge and – to the degree feasible – the consolidated resources.

4. Specification of PS Education and Training Activities Schema

PS education and training addresses healthcare professionals including physicians, nurses, managers, patients. However, training interventions are based on roles rather than professions. This is an important pre-requisite for every healthcare process [11]. Customization of interventions to the different target groups should not lead to fragmentation but should follow a horizontal, multidisciplinary approach. Consequently, the EUNetPaS WorkPackage «Education and Training» participants have decided to adopt a methodology which is based on a three axes schema. This methodology aims to describe the process of the PS Education and Training activities collection. The first axis refers to the Learning Interventions, and includes fields related to the methods, forms of delivery and the assessment of the competencies. The second axis refers to the groups/roles/responsibilities of those who are being trained in Patient Safety. The third axis is about the awareness level(s) that each activity is based on. Same roles may have different needs regarding the awareness level of the various activities. Graduate students may follow basic training, however, students of an MSc program on «Patient Safety» should receive a more advanced level of training.

5. PS Education and Training Activities Questionnaire

Based on the above methodology, the EUNetPaS partners agreed on a questionnaire which was developed and distributed across European experts in PS. Subsequently, each of these experts communicated with EUNetPaS National Contact Points, and requested them to complete the questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire (Table 1) is based on the roles-awareness level-competences schema described above. The questions refer to the title and type of the learning activity, year of establishment,
duration and renewal of the activity, delivery platform, the target audience and the awareness level(s) of the activity, the main expected outcomes, evaluation results and possible barriers/success stories in relation to the activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Fields</th>
<th>Available Choices</th>
<th>Axis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Learning Activity</td>
<td>Seminar, undergraduate, Masters program, short course, CPD, clinical training, other</td>
<td>Competencies/ methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Establishment/ Duration/ Renewal/ Number of trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competencies/ methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery Platform</td>
<td>Classroom, seminar, self reading book, e-learning, clinical training</td>
<td>Competencies/ methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>Staff that provides direct care, staff that provides indirect care, staff that sponsors health care</td>
<td>Roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness Level and related expected outcomes</td>
<td>Awareness, engagement, use/ implementation, expertise</td>
<td>Awareness Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/ Type/ Impact of Activity/Barriers/ Success Stories</td>
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6. Moving from Information Collection to Information Sharing

The collection of information using traditional methods shows limitations in terms of information utilization. The information that derives from the completed questionnaires was summarized and distributed across relevant EU organizations, but since this is a dynamic process, it shares limitations in terms of wide access to information. For this reason, a web-based resource has been developed aiming to facilitate the information sharing. The healthcare community can access the website to search for good practices, submit their own experiences and declare their interest to participate in further discussion, in a truly networking environment. The web space [12] includes informative sections which refer to the scope of this initiative. The user may add new PS education and training activities, and navigate through the uploaded activities in the “Browse Activities” section, by specifying the desirable type of information from the menu. The web space was developed with the use of an open source Content Management System, and additional components for the programming of the web form and the administration of the database have been used.

7. Discussion

Towards the establishment of the required level of trust, quality, accreditation and assessment issues are being addressed as part of the recommendation. These issues are being expressed as a set of essential criteria that learning activities should meet. Discussion is being made on whether each of this material should be validated separately. The objective is to validate the material that has been collected and shared transparently, according to mutually accepted EUNetPaS criteria. As such, the contributed material may be used and exploited by the whole Network, and also by relevant healthcare organisations and teaching institutions.

The information collection phase is not meant to be an exhaustive record of national activities, but should be representative of the current state of initiatives in PS education and training in member states. The relevant PS activities include interventions offered within Health Education curricula; formal and informal CPD
activities offered by external agencies; and activities provided within internal healthcare settings.

The representative activities collected and shared through the platform described, are being utilized in order to develop a robust compilation of good practices regarding PS education and training. The good practices are organized in a guidelines document on PS education and training that aims to be a guidance addressing all interested institutions and persons directly (e.g., physicians, nurses) or indirectly (e.g., healthcare managers, sponsors) in Patient Safety.


References


