Patients Empowerment in Infection Prevention and Hand Hygiene

Authors:
Saeidi Fereshteh 1 – Rahimi Fatemeh 2 – Dr mojtaba hedayat yaghoobi 3 – Gholami Fatemeh 4 – Siyamaki Shiva 5

Address: Shahid Rajaei, Educational & Medical Center. Alborz University of Medical Sciences, Karaj, Iran

1- Critical Care Nursing, BScN, Clinical Research Development Unite Emergency
2- Master of Science in Critical Care Nursing, (BScN, MScN), Clinical Research Development Unite.
3- Infectious disease specialist, Assistant professor, Clinical Research Development Unite.
4- Critical Care Nursing, BScN, Clinical Research Development Unite Emergency
5- Critical Care Nursing, BScN, Clinical Research Development Unite Emergency

Background:

The World Health Organization (WHO) says that patient empowerment has now been expanded to the domain of patient safety. In its report, “Guidance on Engaging Patients and Patient Organizations in Hand Hygiene Initiatives,” WHO observes, “The opportunity for patients to be involved in their healthcare has evolved over the last decades from passive to more active. There are now many ways in which patients can become involved in the process of their own healthcare and may be encouraged to do so to the level of their own ability and choice. In order for patients to actively participate and be fully engaged/empowered, some critical issues must be addressed. Patients can be empowered only after having gathered enough information, understand how to use the information, and are convinced that this knowledge gives them the opportunity, and the right, to participate in helping to keep healthcare safe while not deflecting the responsibility away from their healthcare workers. The responsibility for hand hygiene rests firmly with the healthcare worker.” Sharp, et al. (2014) agree: “The obligation to prevent HAI remains squarely with institutions and providers. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that certain strategies could improve patient involvement. First, lack of information about infections was an important predictor of patient reluctance to stop healthcare personnel who were not wearing gloves or masks; simply providing information regarding risk could improve patient engagement. Second, engagement creates an environment more conducive for patients to hold providers accountable. For example, patients were more willing to ask providers about hand hygiene if instructed to do so or educated on hand hygiene by healthcare providers. Making
patients true partners means arming them with information.” The obligation to prevent HAI remains squarely with institutions and providers. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that certain strategies could improve patient involvement. First, lack of information about infections was an important predictor of patient reluctance to stop healthcare personnel who were not wearing gloves or masks; simply providing information regarding risk could improve patient engagement. Second, engagement creates an environment more conducive for patients to hold providers accountable. For example, patients were more willing to ask providers about hand hygiene if instructed to do so or educated on hand hygiene by healthcare providers. Making patients true partners means arming them with information.

**Conclusion**

There has been some debate about just how far patients will go to remind healthcare workers to wash their hands or engage in other infection-prevention practices, and whether healthcare personnel are receptive to reminders about compliance from their patients. “In some of the larger studies, researchers found that while healthcare workers think that it’s a really good idea in theory to have patients asking them about their practices, about 40 percent of healthcare personnel would not support or appreciate having their patients asking them about it. Somewhat ironically, healthcare workers also said they would be embarrassed if they were caught by their patients not washing their hands; however, they still don’t want to be asked or reminded, which is unfortunate. There haven’t been any studies to differentiate between nurses and physicians; however there has been some anecdotal evidence that it has been an issue among both types of professionals and that there have been some reprisals for patients who have been asking their healthcare workers to do basic things like washing; their hands. While this patient empowerment movement is growing, at the same time we have been trying to improve compliance with hand hygiene for 30 or 40 years and despite a lot of research and education, we really haven’t see any results. So patient involvement in their care is one more tool for our armament to try to turn that around.

**Key word:** Patients ,Empowerment , Infection , Hand Hygiene