

Ensuring Global Patient Safety by Minimizing Medication-Related Errors: World Health Organization

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Abstract

Globally, the issue of ensuring patient safety while utilizing health care has been recognized as a key public health priority. Moreover, the World Health Organization has launched an international initiative with an aim to minimize severe and preventable medication-associated harms in all nations by 50% in the next 5 years. The target is to improve the ways in which medicines are prescribed, distributed or consumed, and augment the level of awareness among patients regarding the risks related to the irrational use of medications like emergence of antimicrobial resistance. To conclude, whenever we take any medication, it is with an intention to be benefitted and not harmed. As medication-induced injuries play an immense burden on the health system, accounts for financial loss, and even deaths, prevention of the same can save both money and human lives.

Keywords: Patient safety; Medications; World health organization

Introduction

Globally, the issue of ensuring patient safety while utilizing health care has been recognized as a key public health priority [1]. In-fact, the global estimates suggest that at least 10% of patients are harmed while receiving health care and that in excess of 40 million patient safety incidents are reported each year [1]. Furthermore, from the financial perspective, it has been reported that medication errors alone account for an expenditure of 42 billion USD each year [1].

Considering the fact that the incidence of unsafe care in developing nations is not known, it is the need of the hour to understand which practices are effective in different settings, so that patient safety standards can be improved [1,2]. One of the important actions to improve global patient safety is through accomplishing commitment from different stakeholders and professional bodies to minimize harms that can be attributed to medications [3]. This should be achieved regardless of financial constraints or shortage of resources [3].

Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO) has launched an international initiative with an aim to minimize severe and preventable medication-associated harms in all nations by 50% in the next 5 years [4]. The target is to improve the ways in which medicines are prescribed, distributed or consumed, and augment the level of awareness among patients regarding the risks related to the irrational use of medications like emergence of antimicrobial resistance [4,5]. It is a fact that medications can account for serious harms if taken wrongly, or is insufficiently monitored or due to some communication gaps, and that either health workers or patients can commit mistakes that eventually results in some form of harm [3].

Nevertheless, all medication errors are potentially avertable and this can be ensured by establishing systems and procedures to warrant that the right patient gets the right medication in the correct dose at the

correct time through the right route [2-4]. However, the chance for such kind of errors increases with workload for health workers, extra patient load, poorly trained staff, and passing ambiguous instructions or information to patient [3]. As most of the medication-related injuries are reported when multiple health care providers are involved in the patient care, it is best to have an organized and coordinated system in the health care facilities [3].

In addition, specific interventions should be taken to be more vigilant towards those medicines which can endanger patient safety on improper usage and for those patients who are either on different medications for different morbidities or patients transferred from one health care establishment to another [1,4]. It is of utmost importance to target all the involved stakeholders or areas, namely patients, general population, health care staff, medications, and practices of medications [3,4]. The WHO is providing assistance to all the nations for formulating strategies and action plans to eventually ensure that patient safety can be accomplished [1,3,4]. Moreover, as a part of the initiative, owing to the high incidence of medication-related adverse events, attempts will be taken to obtain precise estimates of the same [4].

To conclude, whenever we take any medication, it is with an intention to be benefitted and not harmed. As medication-induced injuries play an immense burden on the health system, accounts for financial loss, and even deaths, prevention of the same can save both money and human lives.

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