Guide for healthcare structures
Involved in the Promotion of Safety

10 suggestions
for healthcare facilities

Guide-Objectives and Contents

The development of alliance amongst healthcare trusts, workers, citizens and patients is a fundamental component of the healthcare system which would like to improve their safety levels and quality of care. Throughout the world, healthcare organizations encourage a close collaboration with patients and their families, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has promoted an area, "Patients for Patient Safety", dedicated to increasing the potential initiatives in this area.

In coherence with the numerous international experiences and initiatives, the objective of this document is to provide strategic guidelines to healthcare trusts to favour the involvement of various stakeholders in the promotion of safety. To confront the safety issue in healthcare organization, in an effective and coordinated manner, the following is necessary:

- that all the actions aimed at reducing the risk for patients, workers and visitors are an integral part of the mission statement of the organization and of the professional code of conduct;
- have healthcare trust policies that are able to integrate the diverse aspects(security, risks, catastrophes and fires, workers safety, safety) because the lack of coordination and integration reduce the ability to control risks.

Strategic Guidelines

1. The strategy for the promotion of patient safety and clinical risk management should be included in health planning documents and in its dissemination

To encourage the development of a safety culture, it is necessary that the healthcare structures clearly state their specific policies and the actions they intend to sustain, in order to insure a common effort put forth by all for prevention and risk management. The key issue is, in fact, to spread the belief that safety is a shared commitment by all and a corporate priority. In particular, budget objectives related to risk management and indicators which measure the impact of the policies and strategies implemented, should be introduced. Investigating the organizational aspects and processes which underlie errors in healthcare, consent for the construction of performance and process indicators that produce significant results because it refers to the healthcare system on a whole and not solely to the improvement of an individual's work.

Initiatives should be taken regarding the involvement and training of the society and all subjects, according to appropriate experimental methodology on the national level.

2. Citizen participation for the promotion of safety should be pursued using specific initiatives

Multiple actions can be taken by part of the healthcare structures to various level of the community and services for the involvement of safety, some of which are:

- To disseminate the guide "It's my health and I'm present" addressed to citizens and "Taking care together" addressed to family members as well in all healthcare services, publishing them on the their web-site, placing in act diverse forms of collaboration between general practitioners, paediatricians, pharmacists, schools, volunteer associations, associations representing citizens;
- Getting the patients involved in diagnostic-therapeutic decisions, in particular diagnostic exams involving the use of ionizing radiation, administration of radioactive substances, electromagnetic fields, laboratory tests, in order to increase the patient's knowledge and understanding of the risks and problems for themselves and other, as well having this knowledge will aid them in informed consent;
- Promote a campaign as to how individuals can collaborate for the safety of care, through the drafting and distribution of pamphlets in particular areas; for example, hand washing, the risk of patient fall, the appropriate use of drugs and the appropriate behaviour to employ in specific assistance areas. (hospital, home, outpatient, home health care, RSA, Hospice…);
- Involve patients and families in the reporting of adverse events and where deemed appropriate in the analysis thereof.
- The use of an integrated technological system for the collection of suggestions aimed at improving safety.

3. A communication plan is an instrument for the promotion of patient safety within healthcare facilities

Communication constitutes a fundamental tool for patient safety, creating the assumptions for an effective relationship amongst all subjects: patients, family, volunteers, managers, and healthcare professionals present in all the diverse healthcare structures and local authorities/entities. As well, communication, establishes an organized climate of collaboration, integration, coordination, sharing of

reciprocal training and/or education, which are at the basis of the continuity and safety of care. The structured organizational communication plan must entail all the care and organizational processes and communication with patients and family members. Also to be included are procedures and indications aimed at workers regarding prescriptions, verbal orders, delivery path, the use of computer networks, integrated compilation of medical records.

4. It's important to promote the culture of responsibility

Actions are encouraged for the dissemination of a safety culture orientated to the commitment from all to create a safe organization; everyone must contribute to the mapping of risks and to the identification and adoption of preventative measures, as well as learning from errors when they occur. A dissemination of a safety culture throughout the organization allows to identify strengths and weaknesses and in consequence, to adopt the best developmental strategy.

5. The dissemination of training of the related competencies for promoting patient safety and the involvement of different stakeholders is very important.

It is necessary to have specific initiatives regarding training and/or continuing education programs for the promotion of patient safety to be implemented in training programs for the various professional profiles, especially in integration programs in operational units, based on the abundant contents and approaches of international and national experiences, as well from the management of clinical risk manual. It is opportune to consider the technical and emotional aspects, and focus on training in the field and the involvement of interdisciplinary teams.

It is particularly useful:

- To promote courses geared to the effective communication with patients, fundamental for the promotion of patient safety, in that it permits to obtain information, to have an accurate vision of the situation in order to contribute and increase patients trust towards the NHS and reduce levels of conflict in case of adverse events.
- To train healthcare workers in adverse event management and support to patients and colleagues involved in adverse events.
- Start informal and inter-professional focus group experiences, to become familiar with sharing, communicating and interpreting adverse events and to reduce closed minded behaviour with regards to reporting/signalling of adverse events. Analogously, briefing and walkarounds are to be introduced.
- To foresee to specific initiatives also for health trust management.

6. Communication management is fundamental in case of adverse events.

It is important that each healthcare facility adopts its own procedure, shared amongst all healthcare workers and possibly with a representative of the citizens, which defines how to manage communication with patients and/or their family members when an adverse event occurs.

This procedure must also foresee support for individual operators and teams, to address stress and the negative dynamics that may affect individuals and groups as a whole, following the occurrence of an adverse event.

7. Safety measures involving vulnerable subjects must be adopted

Safety measures must be adopted for the involvement of vulnerable subjects (children, elderly,), using different methods and tools for the communication of the precautions to be taken; the information to be provided, the structure and the organization of services.

8. It is useful to make use of organizations representing citizens and volunteer associations

The identification of safety improvement activity should be achieved with aid of citizen representing organizations, that can collaborate to raise awareness to this matter.

To involve volunteers, the guide entitled "Collaborating for the patient, visitors and personnel safety", is available. Their contribution is useful as well for the reporting, obtaining information, surveys and improvement. Collaboration must also be guaranteed for the introduction of competencies, for the collaboration for safety promotion also in training courses made for their associates.

9. The participation of personnel and other subjects in the promotion of safety, monitoring and the evaluation of activities carried out in healthcare facilities

The approach to guarantee clinical safety is amongst one of the characteristics of leadership in healthcare. Those who take on roles of coordination, management and leadership should therefore promote a culture of safety, detection and analysis of adverse events with a non-punitive logical, and the implementation of measures for improving safety in clinical risk. These competencies should be considered in the evaluation of the performances of health trust managers. It is fundamental to have an approach to encourage participation in safety through the experimentation performed on the field, which are to be adapted to the operative situation helping to highlight and confront the criticality of the situation at hand in an opportune manner. Therefore, the participation of all personnel in the elaboration and update of a safety program is foreseen, as well as, in the projects for the improvement, creation of informative material and in education for citizens, personnel and other subjects. Attention should be raised regarding safety of daily activities. Opinions should be gathered for the sharing and exchange of experiences and problems, of which the results are useful tools for employee incentives and feedback. The decision regarding an employee incentive plan entails the promotion of safety as being a priority. The employee guide " Together we are safety" is a useful reference tool.

It is also necessary that the healthcare facility supplies methods and tools to monitor and evaluate the results of the various participant involvement using appropriate indicators, including data in the report on the activities carried out (social budget).

10. It is important to establish a procedure for public communication of adverse events and programs for patient safety

A public communication procedure for adverse events and programs for clinical risk management must be established, which regulates flow of information inside a healthcare facility and media communications, with the scope to maintain citizens trust in the NHS and to reduce the negative impact, in terms of public image ,of the organization.

The communication of adverse events with mass media can be through a direct initiative of the healthcare facility, but may also be on specific request by journalists. Some indications which may be used for public communication:

- Provide a single account of the facts occurred, after a study with stakeholders. Report that an in-depth investigation will be carried out and preventative measures will be adopted.
- The text used in communications should be adequately prepared and written using appropriate language for the public at large and the mass media; it is opportune to prepare to answer to doubts and give insights.
- Ask journalist to publish the introduced prevention strategies to avoid the reoccurrence of adverse events. This may favour trust by the citizens in the NHS(it is important to remember that in many cases the injured patient poses to underline the concept of "why doesn't this occur to others"), but also by part of the healthcare workers that see that the health trust is able to find solutions to uprising problems.
- Inform and campaign for the dissemination of the initiatives taken on for risk prevention and for an improvement in patient safety.
- Professional staff must adhere and abide to the specific trust policies and professionalism (professional secrecy).