

1. Abstract

Examining patient satisfaction is an extremely important element of assessing the quality of care provided; and its continuous monitoring and taking into account patients' comments in the process of changing care type or method are conditions for offering high quality care services. As a result of these types of assessments, the nursing team obtains information on the level of care they provide and better understands patient expectations, needs, and sources of discontent in terms of medical care. Knowledge obtained in this way enables solving patients' problems. The need to assess and measure the quality of care provided by medical, nursing, and other hospital personnel results from the necessity to search for new, research-based and in accordance with Patient's Rights, methods of professional conduct of medical care providers. In Poland, as well as the world over, chronic diseases, in an era of dynamic progress and development in the field of medical science, continue to be a serious and difficult problem to solve in the context of public health. Determinants of care result in a search for effective solutions in home care, the task of which is to tailor the level of medical services to the patients' changing needs and expectations. The expectations of patients, as well as their families/caretakers, towards the nursing team in terms of the provided care are being studied and discussed more and more frequently. Expectations and their fulfillment are seen as an element that determines the level of satisfaction with care. Nursing care in the home is considered a subsystem affecting the general level of quality of medical services.

Aim: To analyze expectations of patients and their families/caretakers in terms of the quality of nursing services in home care.

Methods: The survey study was conducted in the city and municipality of Suwalki at the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015. To conduct the study, we obtained the consent of three medical facilities offering nursing care in the home. Respondents were divided into two groups: I. Patient Group – patients with chronic diseases under nursing care in the home (148 people), II. Family Group (184) – family members or informal caretakers of a person with chronic diseases under nursing care in the home.

In the study, we used the diagnostic survey method. The study technique was a questionnaire consisting of a proprietary survey and standardized tools: the Acceptance of Illness Scale (AIS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the Scale of Perceived Social Support (SPSS), and the Newcastle Satisfaction with Nursing Scales (NSNS). The study was carried out anonymously in the home environment. The Bioethics Committee of the Medical

University of Bialystok approved the study. Participation was voluntary, with the possibility to withdraw at any moment.

The distribution of the quantitative variables was described using arithmetic mean, standard deviation, median, quartiles, and minimum and maximum values. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. In the case of no significant deviations in determining differences, the Student's t test or analysis of variance was used. If the distribution was not normal, we applied the following nonparametric tests: Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis. Relationships between quantitative variables were described using correlation coefficients – the parametric Pearson's correlation or the nonparametric Spearman's correlation, accordingly, depending on distribution. For qualitative variables, the chi-square test for independence was used. When verifying statistical hypotheses, we assumed a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: To present the results of assessing the expectations of patients (148) and their families/caretakers (184) in terms of the quality of nursing services in home care, we used a total of 332 correctly completed questionnaires. A total of 37 men and 111 women in the Patient Group and 32 men and 152 women in the Family Group took part in the study. The respondents' ages in the Patient Group were over 60 years old in 53.4% of the cases; and in the Family Group, most respondents' ages ranged from 51 to 60. Residents of the city Suwalki accounted for over 80% of the respondents. Over 40% of the respondents did not have a definitive opinion on nurses' education. The most desirable characteristic of home care nurses according to respondents was diligence and accuracy in carrying out procedures (54.8%), the least expected, as indicated by respondents, was the ability to convey medical information (22.3%). The range of a home care nurse's duties is very broad. Providing support, particularly informational (85.1% patient vs. 77.9% family) and emotional (67.6% vs. 71.3%), was deemed as the most important responsibility in the work of a nurse. This is related to the education expected by those in the home care nursing environment (93.2% vs. 94%), the aim of which is recognizing the beneficiaries' nursing needs and health problems (68.9% vs. 76.1%). Activities related to preparing and activating for self-care in illness and disability as well as conveying by the nurse of emotions that are supportive, calming, and mobilizing, reflecting genuine care and a positive attitude towards the supported person with the aim of creating feelings of belonging, being taken care of, and increasing self-assessment and confidence are also important. Assessment of satisfaction with home care nursing was similar in both of the studied groups. The aspect of professionalism scored the highest. The characteristics that differed in the respondents' answers were: caring, honesty, and tolerance.

A very important element in the work of a nurse in the home care environment is an appointment schedule adapted to the life situations of the beneficiaries and the ability to maintain contact in emergencies or problematic situations. In the opinions of the respondents, over 70% of the responses indicated that appointments were adapted to their expectations and that they maintained telephone contact with a nurse.

Conclusions:

The conducted study and results analysis enable stating that:

1. The vast majority of respondents expected nurses in home care to be professional, to provide holistic care, to respect cultural rights and values, to have a wide range of medical knowledge in accordance with contemporary standards, as well as to provide informational and emotional support.
2. Families/caretakers primarily expected nursing and medical care services as well as health education, the most important aim of which would be to improve the quality of life of the patient with chronic disease.
3. The quality of the provided nursing care in the home was satisfied in approximately 75% of selected health needs.
4. The expectations of patients as well as their families/caretakers in terms of the quality of nursing services in home care were fulfilled to a high degree.
5. Patients and their families/caretakers assessed the fulfillment of medical services in home care very highly.
6. The performed statistical analyses did not indicate statistically significant differences between the expectations of patients under home care and their families/caretakers.
7. Systematically conducted studies on the satisfaction of patients as well as their families/caretakers with provided nursing services will enable not only obtaining the beneficiaries' opinions, but most importantly will help improve the quality of nursing care in the home.
8. The obtained assessments of quality of nursing care in the home will then be able to be the basis of improving the state of nursing practice, and furthermore determining weaker and introducing new points of care, as well as further professional development of nurses.

