

A knowledge base for the diffusion of quality and safety good practices in healthcare: the experience of the Italian Agency for Healthcare Services (Agenas)

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Objective:

To enhance patient safety through a knowledge base of good practices to be shared within a community network of healthcare professionals and organizations with the aim of exchanging experiences and know-how, learning from each other, thus strengthening the capacity of the whole healthcare system.

Methods:

Healthcare sector continuously produces innovative solutions directly deriving from experience of professionals who face the problem of enhancing patient safety in different scenarios. As a matter of fact, the diffusion of innovation in healthcare is difficult and when it does happen it is typically slow.¹ Strategies need to be implemented to overcome obstacles preventing the translation from best evidence to best practices.² Our work is based on the assumption that continuous quality and safety improvement could be effectively pursued by promoting actions aiming at identifying innovative practices and at enabling/accelerating their diffusion to the community of healthcare professionals. We report the experience of the Italian Observatory on Good Practices for Patient Safety, promoted by Agenas to implement a specific government mandate.³ The methodological approach is based on the following key steps:

Phase 1 Identification and collection of good practices: a national call for good practices for patient safety was launched in February 2008, open to all healthcare organizations. A standard form for description of good practice was enclosed in the call. The regional healthcare authorities were in charge of local collection and preliminary selection of practices on the basis of a set of criteria defined by Agenas.

Phase 2 Classification of good practices and creation of the knowledge base: based on the level of adherence to the above mentioned criteria, the experiences submitted to the Observatory have been classified into three categories: Good Practices, Potential Good Practices, Initiatives. A web-based database was purposely developed.

Phase 3 Exploitation and continuous update of the knowledge base: the knowledge base has been made publicly available (http://www.agenas.it/buone_pratiche/obp.htm) and has been used/is being used for several dissemination and training events.

Results:

19/21 Italian regional authorities answered to the call for good practices 2008 through 108 healthcare organizations that submitted to the Observatory 395 experiences of patient safety improvement. The distribution of such experiences on the above mentioned categories (level of adherence to criteria) is depicted in Figure 1. In figure 2 the distribution of the experiences on the main typical categories as retrieved from the literature is presented. The handbook containing basic information on good practices has been downloaded 13,000 times in the first two months, clear evidence of the interest raised by this initiative. About 100 healthcare professionals attended each of the two training course and more than 200 people participated in the two public events that Agenas organized in October and in November 2008 basing education and dissemination activities on the good practices submitted to the Observatory.

Conclusions:

A first block of the Italian national model of governance of patient safety has been implemented by starting the National Observatory on Good Practices. The main goal to create a knowledge network has been fully reached. The call for good practices 2009 has been enhanced with some new elements, such as introducing peer review programs. Future development of the Observatory includes opening it up to European experiences.

Figure 1 Classification of experiences

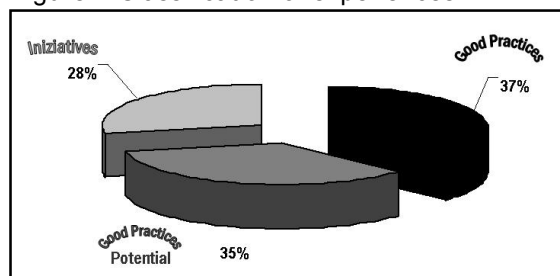
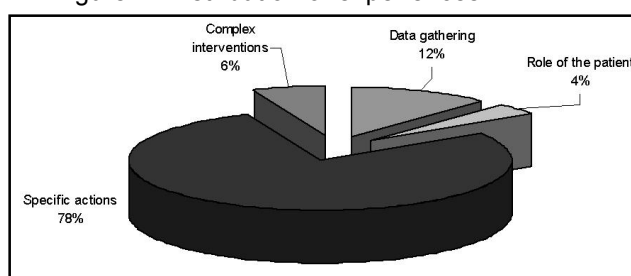


Figure 2 Distribution of experiences



¹ Berwick D.M., Disseminating Innovations in Health Care, JAMA 289 - 15, 2003

² Grimshaw R.J., From best evidence to best practice: effective implementation of change in patients' care, The Lancet 362, 2003

³ Ancona A. et al. From research to political action in clinical risk and patient safety: the Italian experience, ISQUA 2008