

Information management and data exchange are part of patient safety

The Finnish health care legislation e.g. the Health Care Act of 2010 already sets out requirements for patient safety. According to the complementary decree of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, health care organizations must prepare a quality assurance plan and a plan for the implementation of patient safety. In addition, the Finnish Patient Safety Strategy “Promoting patient safety together” guides Finnish social and health care in a uniform patient safety culture and promotes its implementation. One objective of the Patient Safety Strategy is that due attention be paid to patient safety in research and in teaching

The Third Social and Health Information Management Discussion Forum was held on 26 September 2013 in the Finnish city of Kuopio. The theme this time was patient safety. The Discussion Forum focused on various aspects of patient safety: management, enterprise architecture, knowledge and competencies, as well as legislation and development and research perspectives. The event was organized by the University of Eastern Finland, the Kuopio Welfare Research Center (KWRC), Kuopio Innovation Oy, Health and the Well-being Cluster Programme OSKE, the Finnish Society of Telemedicine and eHealth and the Finnish Social and Health Care Informatics Association.

One significant patient safety issue arising at the Discussion Forum was breaches of patient safety having to do with information management and data exchange. Incidents develop, for example, when information is not available when needed in patient treatment. The reasons for the lack of data were lack of interoperability of information systems, patient data entry was delayed, incompleteness or inaccuracy of data. Incidents related to data exchange can be reduced through continuous communication, a variety of checklists and the creation of interoperable information systems. Research on patient safety is also needed, including the impact of an information system on patient safety, how patient information systems provide reliable and timely information to support leaders’ decision making, the reliability of registry data collected retrospectively, main development areas or safe treatments.

Patient safety should be considered holistically, for example from the perspective of the architecture as a whole. Cooperation between operators and the development across organizational, regional, scientific and professional boundaries is essential. New mobile services will pose challenges to patient safety even though in taking an inventive approach to the use we can learn from Africa or Korea. It is also necessary to learn to think in a new way, for example the properties of a mobile phone make it a tool for medical device. Training and knowledge development are key issues in increasing patient safety. Active professionals should be in the front line of the development of new solutions and their deployment. Patient empowerment is also part of the development of patient safety. Patient safety is not only a matter of minimizing damage but also of the purposeful improvement in the quality of life.

The University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio campus hosts a multi-disciplinary and multi-professional research cluster, RECEPTS (Research Center for Comparative Effectiveness and Patient Safety <http://www.uef.fi/en/recepts>) whose aim is to develop new ways to study, monitor and improve the effectiveness of treatment, and patient safety in health and social care in different sectors. RECEPTS is a co-operation project between the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies at the University of Eastern Finland. Northern Savo Hospital District and the city of Kuopio will also participate in the project. The development project is a joint effort with local pharmaceutical and social and health practitioners and government agencies such as Fimea, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

Presentations are available on the website <http://www.uef.fi/fi/stj/odotettavissa-koko-maassa-seminaari>.

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