

EXPERT ASSESSMENT OF PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO OPTIMIZE THE PARTICIPATION OF NURSES IN OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT FROM THE PATIENT

Anna Georgieva¹, Silvia Borisova¹, Violeta Staneva²

¹Department of Health Care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna

²St. Marina University Hospital, Varna

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Nurses are an important resource to the health system and occupy a significant place in providing effective and quality healthcare. At the same time, obtaining informed consent is an important aspect in the nurses' work. Therefore, the opinion survey and the evaluation of experts on developing practical approaches aim to optimize the participation of nurses in the process of informed consent and have a great scientific and practical significance.

AIM: To study the opinion and evaluation of experts on developing practical approaches to optimize the participation of nurses in the process of obtaining informed consent.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: We have attached an analysis of the literature and used a documentary and an expert assessment method. An expert assessment of our own developed practical approaches was performed in the period March-September, 2015. It involved 50 experts - chief and senior nurses at the St. Marina University Hospital and used a questionnaire method of interviewing. Its aim was to optimize the participation of nurses in the process of informed consent of the patient.

RESULTS: The majority of the experts approved the presented algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient and confirmed that the algorithm can be applied in the working process of the nurses. With regard to the presented data sheet for obtaining informed consent for intravenous injection (invasive nursing manipulation) the experts expressed concerns about the possible difficulties in putting it into practice, citing the shortage of nursing staff and time. A significant majority of experts, however, approved the technical sheet and evaluated it as applicable in nursing practice.

CONCLUSIONS: The results of the expert assessment lead to the conclusion that the proposed practical approaches are applicable in nursing practice and will help to optimize the process of informed consent, respect the patient's right to informed consent, the professional comfort and safety of nurses.

Keywords: *expert assessment, informed consent, nurses, patients, practical approaches*

Address for correspondence:

Anna Georgieva
Medical University of Varna,
84 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd
Varna,
e-mail: anngebg@gmail.com

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AIM

The aim of this study is to examine the opinion and the assessment of experts on developing practical approaches to optimize the participation of nurses in the process of obtaining informed consent.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

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RESULTS

The analysis of the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria and the available literature on opportunities to optimize the participation of nurses in the process of obtaining informed consent from the patient demonstrates the need to develop practical approaches in this regard, which will optimize the participation of nurses in the process of obtaining informed consent (1,2).

Based on the research, an algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient was developed.

The algorithm is based on researched and uniformly adopted by various doctrines five elements contained in the concept of "informed consent", namely: provision of necessary information, understanding of the information, awareness of the acquired information, „competence" of the patient to give consent (3,4,5,6,7,8,9).

At the same time the establishing of an algorithm was accepted by most authors working on the problem. There are three conditions guaranteeing the validity of the agreement such as a statement of patient competence, information needed for the

consent and voluntary consent (free consent) (3,4,5, 10,11,12).

The algorithm includes a systematic sequence of actions of the nurse in the process of informed consent that provide professional security, efficiency of the process and validity of the consent of the patient.

The proposed algorithm is applicable both in the process of obtaining general consent to treatment and care, where the nurse is a partner of the doctor, and in the process of obtaining consent for specific nursing interventions carried out autonomously or for a medical purpose (*Figure 1*).

Based on the proposed model, a technical data sheet for informed consent for intravenous injection can be developed as well as data sheets for other invasive nursing interventions. The technical sheet contains the name of the hospital, the name of the clinic/department; information about the patient and/or his legal representative. It addresses the patient, informing him of his right to a written informed consent or a refusal of an invasive nursing manipulation. The technical data sheet is explained in a simple language to the patient with a focus on the performance algorithm of the manipulation, the behavior of the patient as well as the possible complications. It outlines the range in which the nurse is competent to inform the patient regarding the intervention and mentions the possibility of the patient questioning and being provided with a response from a competent medical practitioner /physician or nurse/. The slip contains a column where the patient (or his legal representative) can document their informed consent (or informed refusal). The document ends with the date, name and signature of the nurse.

The author's model data sheets for obtaining informed consent for invasive nursing manipulations (intravenous injection) is a subject of expert opinion on its contents, layout and technical feasibility in nursing practice.

First an algorithm was developed to obtain an informed consent from the patient and a technical data sheet for obtaining informed consent for intravenous injection was proposed for an expert assessment in order to be put into the nurses' practice af-

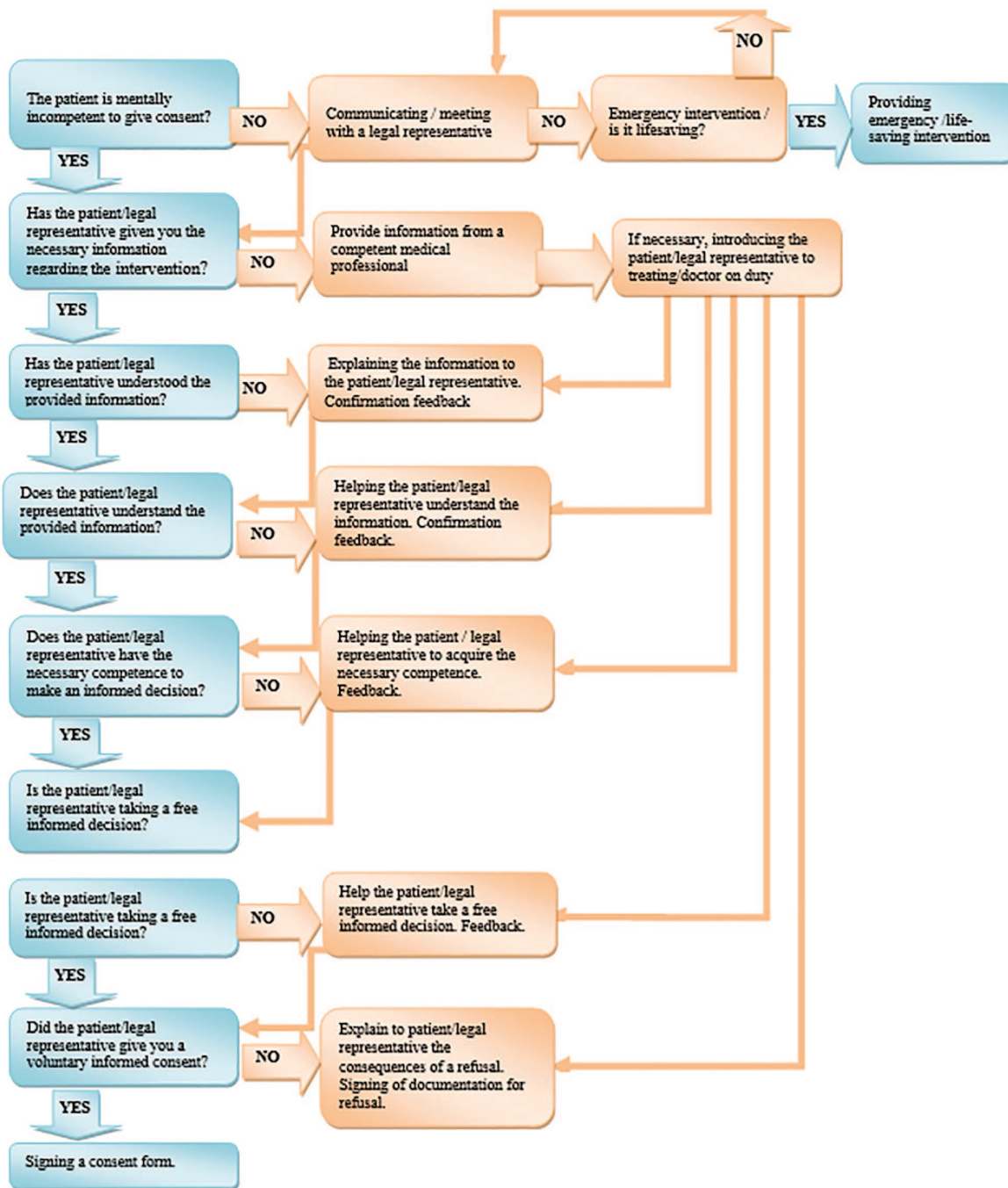


Figure 1. Algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient

A technical data sheet model was developed for obtaining informed consent of the patient for intravenous injection (invasive nursing manipulation) conducive to providing respect of the right of patients to informed consent, before invasive interventions under the current legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 89, para 1 of the Health Act), as well as professional comfort and security in the performance of the nurse's professional tasks (1). The basis of the developed authors' model of technical data sheet for obtaining informed consent of the patient for intravenous injection was a model sheet for obtaining informed consent proposed by S. Toncheva (2004) and a model of informed consent protocol proposed by N. Vassilev et al. (2007) (13,14).

ter adequate updating and adoption by the relevant institutions.

Once acquainted with the contents of the presented algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient, all the experts indicated that they approved and had no critical comments and suggestions (100%).

The majority of experts believe that the algorithm would not hinder nurses (73.9%). The remaining 26.1% of the experts indicate its individual steps would impede health professionals. They are as follows: the definition capacity of the patient to give consent (50.0%); communicating with a legal representative (40.0%); determining whether the patient has received the necessary information (30.0%); determining whether the patient fully understands the information provided (50.0%); determining whether the patient understands the necessary information (10.0%) and determining whether the patient has given informed consent voluntarily (10.0%). Only one of the experts expressed skepticism about the applicability of the algorithm in nursing practice, citing the lack of nursing staff and time. The results exceed 100% because the experts gave more than one answer.

The majority of the experts approved the presented algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient and considered that it would be applied well in the work of nurses (Figure 2.).

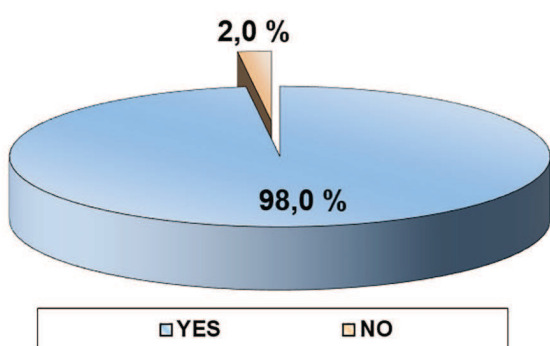


Figure 2. Practical applicability of the algorithm for obtaining informed consent

According to the experts, the implementation of the algorithm for obtaining informed consent from patients will help raise the quality of health care

(42.0%), professional comfort and safety of the nurse in obtaining informed consent from patients (66.0%) and also respect the patients' right to informed consent (64.0%) (the results exceed 100% because the experts gave more than one answer). The opinion of one of the senior nurses is interesting. She states that in her opinion this is an innovative approach that will improve the work of nurses and increase patient satisfaction.

According to one fifth of the experts', written informed consent was applied to all nursing interventions the majority of them being invasive nursing interventions (80.0%).

The experts expressed their opinion on the applicability of the proposed technical data sheet for obtaining informed consent for intravenous injection in nursing practice, especially invasive nursing interventions. Very few of them have expressed a negative opinion on the matter (6.0%). Their main arguments are detailed patient information in the form and the shortage of nursing staff and time. In this regard, one of the experts recommended for information to be summarized. As it is clear from the data presented in Figure 3, however, a significant majority of experts do not have any comments and recommendations and consider that the technical data sheet for obtaining informed consent for intravenous injection is applicable in nursing practice (Figure 3).

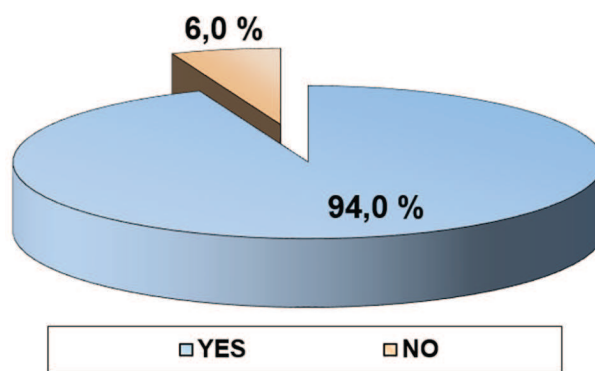


Figure 3. Practical applicability of the technical data sheet for obtaining informed consent

DISCUSSION

The positive evaluation of the developed practical approaches to optimize the participation of nurs-

es in the process of informed consent is unambiguous proof of their practical applicability in nursing practice.

The need to introduce a technical data sheet for obtaining written informed consent from the patient is confirmed by leading authors in the field of health care. As stated by S. Toncheva (2004): "Introduction of a unified informed consent form does not replace the personal contact with the patient's nurse, but it saves time. The proposed model of a technical data sheet for informed consent will create a partnership and shared responsibility between nurses and patients when it comes to health." S. Toncheva (2004) sees the document as part of the psychological preparation of patients (13).

The first developed model of a technical data sheet for informed consent for intravenous injection (invasive nursing manipulation) has the original document structure and content, reflecting all the necessary requisites of the written form for obtaining informed consent from the patient. The new developments determined the scientifically substantiated and justified necessity of having a written consent, thereby ensuring that the rights of the patient's for informed consent for invasive procedures within the professional competence of the nurse. Applied in nursing practice, on the one hand, it will assist in the legal performance of invasive procedures performed by the nurse and on the other, it will protect her during the implementation of risk-accompanied intervention.

The introduction and development of an algorithm for obtaining informed consent from the patient and its application in nursing practice will help, on one hand, in protecting the patient's right to informed consent and will improve the efficiency of this process, contributing to a better quality of nursing care, and on the other hand it will increase the safety of professional nurses.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the expert assessment lead to the conclusion that the proposed practical approaches are applicable in nursing practice and will help to optimize the process of informed consent, respect the patient's right to informed consent, the professional comfort and safety of nurses.

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